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Birds of An Indian Village
by Dewar

Home Making
Sept.

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BIRDS OF AN INDIAN VILLAGE

INTRODUCTION

THERE is one pleasure which the poorest man may enjoy because it costs nothing, and that is watching the birds that live around him. Some pleasures grow stale after a time; watching birds is not one of these. The more you observe birds the more interesting they become. They cannot tell you about themselves but you can find out a great deal about them by observing them. I hope, by telling you something about the birds in my village, to induce you to watch those in your village, for they will be of the same kind. My village is an ordinary one. There is a tank at one side and beyond this a mango grove. On all the other sides are cultivated fields. In the *abadi* there is a large *pipal* tree and some smaller trees.

I

The Roller or "Blue Jay"

THE birds in my village are so many that it is difficult to know where to begin. Even as I write I can hear the chatter of the mynas and calls of the Copper-smith and the Green Barbet and the harsh cries of the *nilkant* or Roller.

Let me begin with the last of these, because it is so very beautiful. The Hindus consider it very lucky to see the *nilkant* on Dasehra day, and, as it is a very common bird, there is no reason why ev-

ery boy should not do this. You cannot help noticing it as it flies lazily by. Its wings, barred with light and dark-blue, are more gorgeous than the darbar clothes of a raja. When it sits on a perch it is not so showy because



Roller or "Blue Jay"

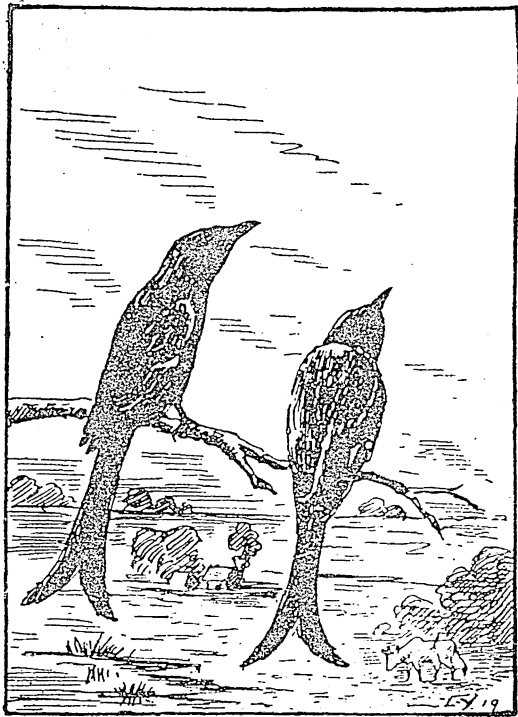
its head, neck and wing covering are a dull pinkish brown. The cock and the hen are alike in appearance. The *nilkant* is a good friend to the rayat because it lives largely on grasshoppers, crickets, and other insects which are injurious to crops. It sits on a perch — often a branch of a tree and keeps a sharp lookout on the ground. The moment it sees anything moving below, the *nilkant* flies to the ground, seizes the insect in its powerful bill and devours it. In March the *nilkants* turn their thoughts to nesting. First they choose their mates. While this is going on the birds make a great deal of noise. You must often have heard their harsh cries. The voice of the *nilkant* is as discordant as its wings are beautiful. When engaged in selecting mates *nilkants* perform the most extraordinary antics in the air; now they fly high up, and then drop down as though dead, and suddenly check themselves and fly off in another direction. After the birds have paired the cock and the hen delight to sit side by side on a branch. Then they have to find a place for the nest. The spot chosen is usually a hole in a decayed part of a tree, often the place where a stout branch has been broken off. Sometimes the nest is in a hole in the wall of a temple or other building. When the birds have chosen a comfortable home they carry into it some dried grass and feathers and then the hen lays four white eggs on these. After the hen has been sitting on the eggs for about fourteen days the young ones come out of them. When they first come out of the egg they are blind and without any feathers. They can however squeak and the older they grow the more noisy they become. The parents feed them very busily from morning to evening and you will be able to discover the whereabouts of a nest by watching the parent birds flying to it with insects in the beak. When the young ones are about 20 days old, they leave their nest and then look just

like their parents, but are smaller. Although they have never been taught, they fly quite strongly directly they leave the nest—how different from babies who take several months in learning to walk!

II

The King-Crow

THE King-Crow or *bhuchanga* is a bird you know very well. He is smaller than a bulbul but has rather a long tail which turns out at the ends. The plumage is glossy black in both the cock and the hen. The *bhuchanga* feeds entirely on insects and in consequence is a great help to the rayat. It usually catches its prey when flying. It is very fond of perching on the backs of cattle, taking care to sit far enough forward to avoid being hit by



King-Crows

the tail when the cow swishes this to drive off an insect. When the cow moves along it disturbs the winged insects which are resting in the grass and the king-crow then catches these in the air. Thus the clever little king-crow is saved the trouble of looking for its food. It has a number of notes; some are pleasing and others harsh and angry-sounding. It is fond of calling just before dawn. It does not lay eggs until the end of April, but for more than two months before that the birds begin to pair. While they are choosing mates they are very noisy. You may then see two or three of them sitting on a tree and bowing to one another and making much noise. After the birds have paired they begin to build nests. They do not lay their eggs in a hole as the *nilkant* does, but build an exquisite little cup high in a tree, usually at the places where a branch divides into two. The birds then pick up fine roots and grass and by means of cob-web, which, as you know, is very sticky and clinging, they fasten the nest materials together and to the branch that supports the nest. In the early stages the nest is just a mass of roots and grass kept together by cob-web. When sufficient of these has been collected, first one bird and then the other sits on them and turns round so that the bird's breast causes the materials to take the shape of a cup in somewhat the same way as a potter shapes his clay cups. The nest is not larger than the smallest kind of *diali*. When all is ready three or four eggs are laid. These are white or very pale red and sometimes have tiny spots which are dark red or brown. During the nesting season the king-crow becomes very fierce. A pair defend their nest with such determination that they will not allow any big bird to come to the tree in which it is placed. If a crow, a kite or other big bird, or even a monkey, tries to come to the tree the pair of little *bhuchangas* fly at it,

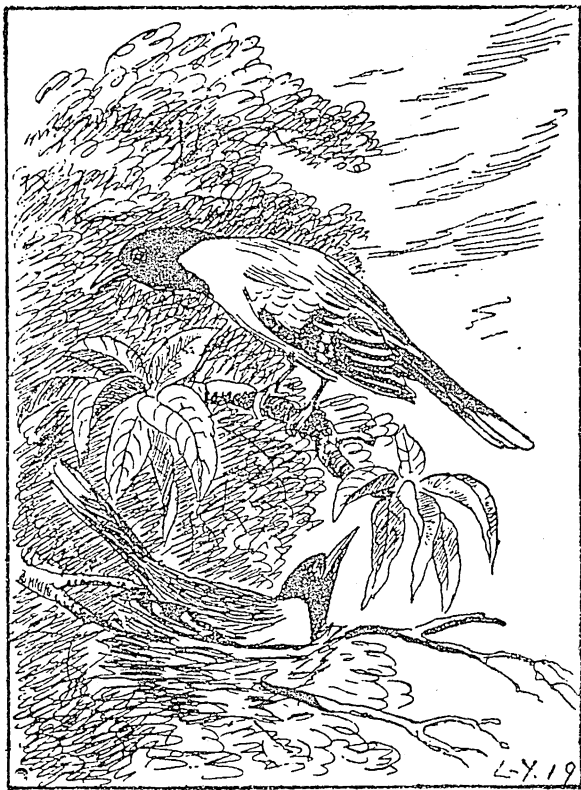
screaming loudly, and peck at it so viciously that the intruder is glad to fly away. Birds are not great fighters. Unless trained by man to fight no bird will ever resist an attack. Most birds, however, are ready to fight in defence of their eggs or young ones. Indeed, the king-crow sometimes attacks birds that do not mean to harm it. Perhaps this is reason why the bird is sometimes called the *kotwal*. Some timid birds take advantage of the bravery of the king-crow to nest in the same tree as he does. They know that he will fight their battles for them and keep away the birds that eat eggs. Young king-crows when they leave the nest are not so black as their parents and their tails are not so long. There is another kind of king-crow which has a white breast. This bird has a very sweet song, but we do not often see it in our village.

III

Orioles

EVERY boy and girl must have noticed the beautiful *pilak* or Oriole which is found in the trees of the mango grove. Perhaps you have noticed that there are two kinds of *pilaks*. In one kind the head is black and in the other it is bright yellow. Both are called *pilak*, but the bird with the black head is called *zardak* in some villages, *pirola* in others, and in some parts it is called the *pahari topidar pilak*. The black-headed bird is the one seen most often in the cold weather, while in the hot weather the yellow-headed bird is commoner. Some birds remain in the same place all the year round, others move from place to place according to the season. Orioles are of this kind. Whenever you see a *pilak* you should look to see whether it has a black head or not and write down a note of what you see. Then,

after two or three years, you will learn the habits of the two kinds in your village. The cock *pilak* is bright yellow all over except the wings which are black and the bill which is



A pair of Black-headed Orioles at the nest

pink. The hen is not so brightly coloured, her yellow being tinged with green. In the black-headed kind the whole head, throat, and the upper part of the back are black in both cock and hen. Both kinds of *pilaks* have very sweet-

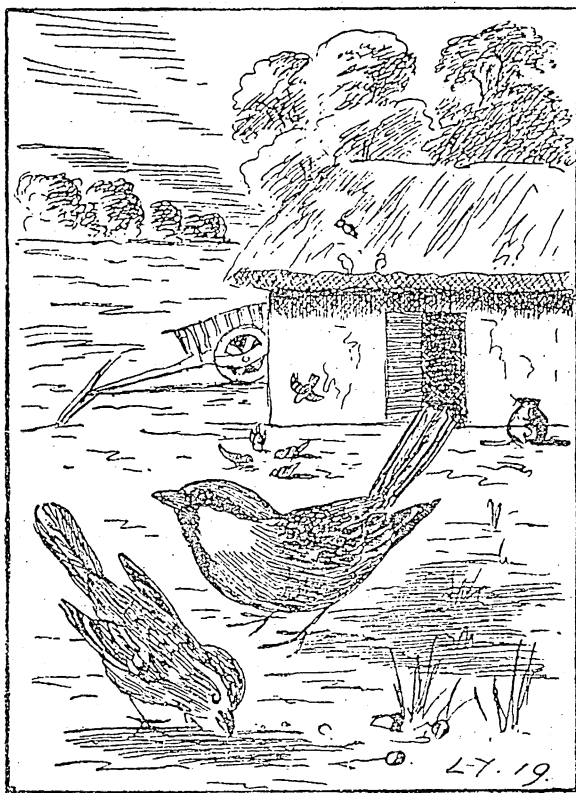
sounding notes. The name *pirola* is an attempt to copy the call which is heard in every mango grove from March to June. The *pilak* lives on mulberries and the fruit of *banyan*, *pipal* and *pakar* and other trees. It also eats insects. Orioles keep almost entirely to trees and do not often go into the open like *nilkants* and *bhuchangas*. Orioles build their nests in April, May and June. They are very shy birds and usually build in the same trees as the *bhuchanga* for protection. The nest is a very beautiful and wonderful object. If you were told to build a nest in the tree you would, I think, do it in the same way as the *pilak* does. It finds a branch which divides into two, so that the nest will have a double support. The bird then seeks a strip of tough material, often a strip of bark from the mulberry tree. Then one end of this is passed round and round one branch and the other end round the other branch. Then another strip is treated in the same way until there is a firm support for the nest. Then the bird collects dried grass and makes a cup of this in much the same way as the king-crow does, but it is not necessary to use cob-web to fix the ends to the branch because it is supported by the strips of material which have previously been attached to the branch by the bird. As I have said, the Oriole is a very shy bird, but if you watch carefully you may be able to see the bird make its nest, and if you do, you should write down what you see, because we do not quite know how the bird winds the supporting material round the branch. If you can find this out, you will have made an interesting discovery. It is only by careful watching that we learn the ways of birds and there is no reason why you should not learn new things about them. The *pilak* lays two or three eggs. These are white with tiny black specks chiefly at the large end of the egg.

IV

Sparrows

THE *Gauriya* is one of the commonest birds in India and in most countries. It has, like the rat and crow, attached itself to man. Wherever there are men's houses there will you see crows, sparrows and rats. All three are evils, but the sparrow is, I think, the least of these evils. Notice his thick bill. This is a feature of birds that live on grain. The cock has the top of the head gray, his cheeks are white and there is a black stripe running from the chin to the middle of the breast. The rest of his plumage is of various shades of brown and gray. There is a narrow white bar in the wing. The hen is a dull gray-brown bird with a pale yellow eye-brow and a narrow white bar on the wing. Sparrows often come, not only into the courtyard (*sahan*), but into the house itself. Like the rats they come after the grain. When they cannot find enough to eat in the village site (*abadi*), they go into the fields and feed upon the ripening grain. Thus the rayot regards them as harmful. But, as they feed their young ones on caterpillars and injurious insects, they do some good. All the sparrows of several villages roost together in a thick bush or low tree, and what a noise they make when they go to bed! Their chit-chit-chitter can be heard from quite a long distance. It is a mistake to think that birds always spend the night in their nests. Most birds use nests only as places for their eggs and young ones. As soon as the young are able to leave the nest this is deserted. You will find it interesting to watch birds just before nightfall in order to discover where they sleep. In the case of such birds as crows, sparrows, parrots and mynas, which roost in large companies

you will easily discover where they sleep on account of the din the birds make before settling down for the night. If you stand near the thicket in which the sparrows roost



A pair of Sparrows

a little before it gets dark, you will see the birds flying in from all sides until there may be several hundreds of them in a single small tree. Sparrows roost in one place for some weeks and then sometimes suddenly change the place. Why they do this I do not know.

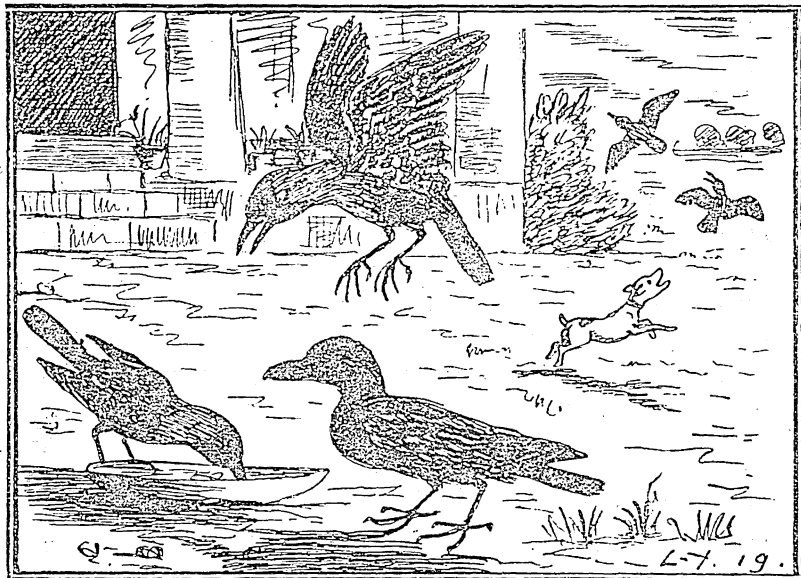
A pair of sparrows brings up several families in the course of the year and there is no month in which they may not be seen at their nests. Probably there are some pairs now feeding their young in your village. They make their nest in any kind of hole or crevice in a house, tree, or wall. Sometimes, but not often, they build a nest in a bush. Having selected a spot (it may be inside your courtyard) they carry to this straw, grass, rags, paper, wool, cotton and feathers — anything soft. They push these into the hole so carelessly that pieces project and tell you where the nest is. When they have collected enough material the hen lays five or six eggs which are rather pretty. They have a pale green, gray or yellow surface on which are spots and patches of darker colour. As the young birds are born in holes it is not easy for you to see what goes on inside the nest. But, if after you have seen the parents carrying food to the nest for several days, you remove the nest and the young ones from the hole and put them in a place where you can see them you may observe the parents feed their young ones. You will then see what large caterpillars they bring and how eagerly the young birds open their yellow mouths to receive the food.

There is another sparrow which is sometimes called the *Raji*, sometimes the *Tooti* and sometimes the *Jungali Churi*, and, if you look carefully for it in the mango grove in your village, you are likely to see it. It is very like the hen *Gawriya*, but there is a yellow patch on the throat, brighter in the cock than the hen, and for this reason the English call it the yellow-throated sparrow. It is not nearly so bold a bird as the *Gawriya* and does not frequent houses. It usually makes its nest in a hole in a tree, sometimes in a bamboo. It does not bring up one family after another as the *Gawriya* does. If you would find its nest you must look for it between April and July.

V

Crows

THERE are two kinds of crows in my village and in yours. The corby or *bara kanva* and the smaller, or house crow or common *kanva*. The former is a large bird with glossy black plumage. It has a very big



House Crows and Corbies

and powerful bill. The other crow is smaller and has a gray neck. The two kinds of crows live side by side, but they do not quarrel because the smaller one is afraid of the larger. The smaller bird is very impudent. It eats almost everything that can be eaten—fruit, grain, chapatis, sweetmeats, insects, eggs, young birds, sugar,

ghee and even the nectar of flowers. When the *semal* or silk-cotton tree puts forth its big red cup-like flowers the crows collect and, along with the *mynas* and many other birds, suck the honey from these flowers. Crows live in towns and villages and are always on the lookout for something to fly away with. Hence they are very troublesome to the people, especially to the children. It is not safe to leave anything eatable lying in such a position that a *kauwa* can see it. If you carry on your head a basket containing anything eatable you may be sure that the crows will come and steal unless you cover up the contents of the basket. Crows usually sleep together in large numbers in some *bagh* or clump of trees. In some places crows from hundreds of villages roost together and the noise they make before going to sleep at nightfall is very great. In other places the crows of one village only sleep together. You should try to see what the crows of your village do. By watching them just before sunset you may be able to discover where they sleep. It may be near by or at too great a distance for you to follow them. Crows wake up very early in the morning. While it is still dark their loud calls may be heard before they separate to visit their feeding grounds. At the end of February the *bara kauwa* begins to build its nest. The nest is placed high up in a tree, and, as you would expect from the size of the bird, it is a large structure. You may often be able to discover it by watching a *kauwa* flying to it with a twig in its bill. The nest is composed of twigs and small sticks and is always lined with hair from the tail of a horse or some hair which the barber has shaved off a man. Three, four or five eggs are laid. These are green with brown spots. The smaller *kauwa* usually does not build its nest till the rainy season begins. The nest looks like that of the *bara kauwa*, but it is not lined with

hair. The eggs are greenish blue speckled with dark yellow. From the moment the egg is laid until the young can fly, the nest is never left deserted. One or the other of the parent birds always remains at it. Crows steal and eat the eggs in the nests of other birds and they fear that their own eggs will be stolen. This is why they watch so carefully. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the clever *koel* manages to cheat the crow.

VI

The Koel

IN the cold weather we do not see many koels in my village. Nearly all of them leave this Province in November and go south where it is not so cold. As soon as the days begin to grow warm the koels return, and by the end of February their rich fluty notes may be heard. As the weather grows hotter these birds call more loudly, and they utter their cries by night as well as by day; indeed they are most noisy just before dawn. These birds have a variety of calls—the one most frequently heard and that from which the name is derived is *koel*, *koel*, *koel*, each call being louder than the one before it. There are two other common calls. These are shrieks such as one may expect a bird in pain to emit. One is *kuoo*, *kuoo*, *kuoo*, and the other is *karree*, *karree*, *karree*, heard when the bird is being chased by the angry crows. The cock koel is a shining black bird with bright red eyes. He has a slender bill and long tail. He might be mistaken for a crow. The hen is a brown bird largely spotted with white. Koels feed on fruit and berries. They belong to a family called cuckoos, many of which do not build nests, but lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. These sit on the cuckoo's eggs and feed the

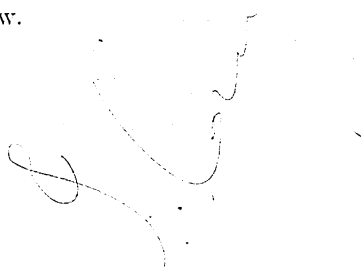
young ones when they come out of the eggs. The koel lays its eggs in the nest of the common *kauwa*. As we have seen the *kauwa* never leaves the nest deserted after an egg has been laid, and as the *kauwa* is a more powerful bird than the koel, the latter has to resort to a trick to get



House Crows chasing a Cock Koel

its egg into the crow's nest. Crows detest koels. Perhaps they suspect that koels play tricks on them. When one of these alights in a tree in which a crow has a nest the owners of the nest at once attack it. The koel takes advantage of this fact. The cock flies to the tree where a crow is sitting on her eggs (taking care to select a nest in which eggs have been newly laid) and calls out *koel, koel, koel!* The angry crow at once attacks the koel who flies away

pursued by the crow. The koel can fly much faster than the crow and could easily get right away if he tried, but he wishes to entice the crow to a distance from the nest, so that, when chased, he only flies fast enough to keep just ahead of the crow. While he is being chased by the crows, the hen koel flies to the nest they have left, and deposits her egg in it, and, if she be given time, she usually carries away one of the crow's eggs. It is thought that the koel lays her eggs on the ground and then carries it in her bill to the crow's nest. I have never seen her do this, but if you look carefully you may see her carrying the egg. She has very little time in the nest and if she were caught there by the returning crows she would be killed by them. The crows after chasing the cock koel some distance give up the pursuit and return to the nest. Even if the koel has not had time to take away a crow's egg, and although the egg of the koel is smaller and of a quite different colour to that of the crow, being dull yellowish green (instead of pale greenish blue) blotched with brown, the crow does not seem to notice the strange egg, but sits on it along with its own, and when the young koel comes out of the egg (which it does before the young crows) the crows bring it food and continue to feed it long after it leaves the nest. If you watch crows carefully in the rainy season you may see them feeding young koels. You can easily tell a young koel from a young crow because the koel has a thinner body and its plumage is almost invariably spotted with white. When the common koel first leaves the nest it tries to imitate the call of the crow.



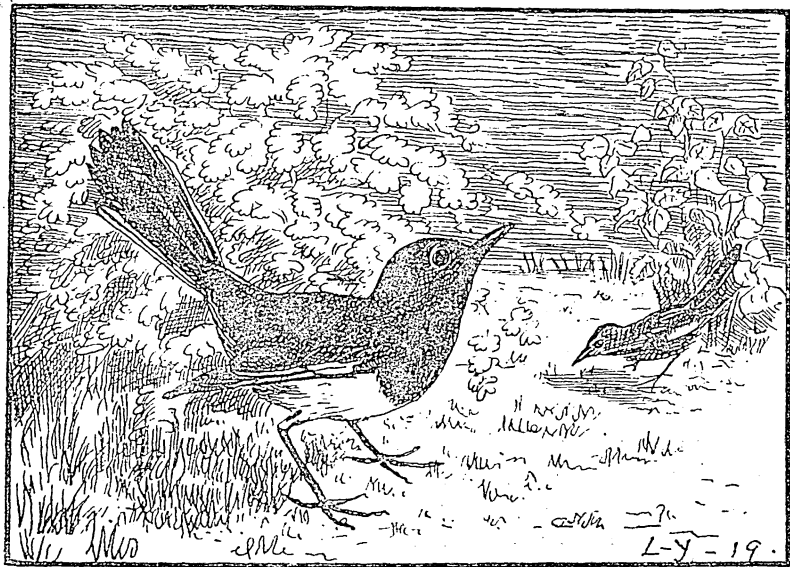
VII

The Magpie-robin or Dhayal

NEXT to the *Shama*, which is not found in my village, but which some people keep in cages, the Magpie-robin or *Dhayal* is the finest song-bird in Hindustan. From the middle of April until the middle of July the cock *Dhayal* sings most sweetly. After the young ones have left the nest he ceases to sing and does not begin again till the following March. When he first tries to sing he does not do very well. His notes are often harsh, but gradually he gets into tune and then his melody is very fine. The cock *Dhayal* is about the size of a bulbul. His plumage is black and white. The head, neck and upper breast are shining black. The lower parts are white, the white being sharply marked off from the black. The wings and tail are black with conspicuous white bars. The hen is marked like the cock, but she is grey in the parts where he is black. These birds often carry the tail so that it points to the sky. When the bird runs along the ground and suddenly stops, it always raises its tail in this way. *Dhayals* feed on insects, so they are good friends of the ryots. They pick up most of their food from off the ground. *Dhayals* are most likely to be found in mango groves, but, as they are not afraid of men, they will often come right into the village (*abadi*) and they usually build their nests in buildings.

The *Dhayal*, unlike many birds, brings up only one family in the year. April, May and June are the months in which to find the nest. This is always placed in some kind of a hole. It may be a hole in a tree or a wall or in the narrow space which often occurs between the wall and the roof of a house. The place selected is usually not very

far from the ground. Sometimes the *Dhayal* selects a hole in a bank or in a well. Having chosen a suitable hole, the bird proceeds to look for building material. I am not quite sure whether both the cock and the hen bring material to the nest. I think they do. But as I have a lot of work to do, I do not find as much time as I should like to watch



The Magpie-robin or *Dhayal*

the ways of birds. As the cock and the hen differ in appearance it is quite easy to distinguish them even from a distance. Whenever you study the habits of any kind of bird, you should always try to find out whether both sexes take part in nest-building and in sitting on the eggs. The *Dhayal* builds its nest of grass, thin roots, straws and feathers and sometimes leaves. Four eggs are usually laid. These are very pretty. The ground colour is pale bluish green.

This is thickly spotted with reddish spots. There are usually most spots at the thick end of the egg. If you look at the egg of almost any of the birds, you will see that it is not perfectly oval, but one end is more pointed than the other.

VIII

The Indian Robin

THE Indian Robin or *Dama* is a bird which is found in every village. It is not afraid of men, and even hops about in the courtyards of houses. In shape it is like the *Dhayal* but a little smaller, being of the size of the sparrow or *Gawriya*. The cock *Dama* is a black bird, but his back is brown, and there is a narrow white band in each wing and the patch of feathers under its tail is dull red. As this bird, like the *Dhayal*, often raises its tail it is easy to see the red patch. The hen is plain brown all over except for the red patch under the tail just like that of the cock. During the nesting season, which is from March to July or even August, the cock Robin has a sweet song, but this is not so loud as that of the *Dhayal*. The *Dama*, like the *Dhayal*, lives on insects which it picks up off the ground. As we have seen, *Dhayals* live in groves and shady places, but the *Dama* does not seem to like shade. It prefers barren ground, where the soil is stony and where cactuses and small bushes grow. *Damas* are always to be found near railway lines and in dry nullahs. The *Dhayals* bring up only one brood in the year, but the *Dama* has sometimes two or three families.

It uses the same nest for each successive brood. The nest is placed in holes in house-walls or niches in temples and mosques; also in holes in banks, and sometimes in the spaces between bricks which are being dried in a brick-kiln.

If you go to a brick-kiln you will almost certainly see a pair of *Damas* near by, because *Damas* like dry places. Occasionally the nest is built in a thick bush, a cactus or an aloe plant. Sometimes the *Dama* builds its nest in an old tin or a *Chara* that has been thrown away into a bush. The nest is composed mainly of dried grass. But the Robin will use almost anything suitable that it can find. You may find, worked into the structure of the nest, feathers, wool, cotton, pieces of munj-matting, and in nearly every nest you will see a piece of the skin which a snake has cast off. If the Muharram happens to take place during the nesting season the Robin picks up pieces of coloured paper, mica, etc., used in the construction of tazias. There are very few places in which you may not find a Robin's nest and there is scarcely any kind of suitable material which you may not find used in constructing the nest. The number of eggs laid varies. You may see two, three, four or even more in a nest. The eggs are white, usually tinged with green or pink and closely-speckled and spotted with reddish brown, chiefly at the broader end. April is the month when most eggs are likely to be found.

If you visit a village in Madras or Bombay you will find *Damas* there, but the cocks there have the back black instead of brown. There is no difference between the hen birds of the two localities.

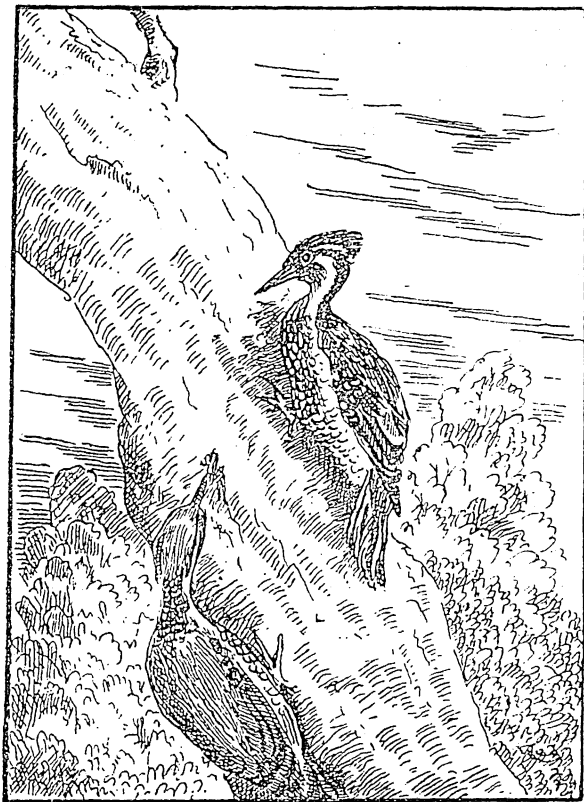
IX

Woodpeckers

TO-DAY I want to talk to you about some very beautiful and wonderful birds which are found in the mango groves in my village and which you will see in the groves near your village. They are called Woodpeckers or *Kathphurias*.

You will not often see them on the ground. They seek their food on the trunks of trees, up which they move in a series of jerks. The woodpecker has a long sticky tongue which it pushes into the crevices of the bark where insects hide. The insects stick to this and so the bird can swallow them. The bird often taps at the bark with its beak. This causes the insects, which are hiding beyond the reach of the woodpecker's tongue, to come to the surface so that the bird can catch them. It is because of its habit of tapping with its beak on the bark that it is called Woodpecker by the English people and *Kathphuria* by Indians. If you watch a Woodpecker you will see that it always moves up the tree and never down. When it gets near the top of a trunk it flies off to the lower part of another tree, uttering a loud cry, which is difficult to describe but easy to recognize when you know it. There are three kinds of woodpecker in my village, and if you look for them you will see them in yours. The first is called the Golden-backed Woodpecker because its back is beautiful golden yellow. This bird is nearly as big as a crow. The lower back and tail are black. The wings are black and golden yellow spotted with black. The breast is white with black spots. The sides of the head are white with a network of black lines. The back of the head and the crest of the cock are bright red. In the hen they are black with white spots. You cannot make a mistake about this wonderful bird. There is not another like it in your village. Apart from its colour it has a peculiar shape. The tail feathers are stiff and point downwards, and, as the bird moves about on a tree trunk, it often rests on the tail which is almost like a third leg. You should notice the peculiar shape of the head and beak. The head, neck and beak are not unlike a pickaxe (*kudali*). Indeed, the bird uses it as one, as you will see when you watch it making its nest.

You know how hard the bark and wood of the mango tree is. Nevertheless the woodpecker cuts out of this a hole big enough to hold himself and his family. The bird bores a hole



The Golden-backed Woodpeckers

of which the diameter is about three inches. This hole usually leads into a hollow part of the tree. Many trees get hollow inside as they grow old. If the hole is excavated in a tree, which is not hollow inside, the birds themselves have

to hollow out the nest chamber which is about five or six inches in diameter. The point of the woodpecker's bill is very sharp, but, even so, the bird has to bring it down with great force in order to cut into the wood. The noise of each stroke of the bill may be heard a long way off. When once the hole has been started, each peck brings away a small chip of wood. As the bird hammers at the wood, it stands with its feet apart and its stiff tail pressed close against the tree trunk. At first the chips of the wood fall naturally to the ground, but as the hole gets deep the bird has to throw them out with its bill. The birds work all day long, but nevertheless it takes them several days to make the nest. I hope you will see the woodpeckers making their nest-hole in some tree in your village. You should notice what a beautiful round hole the birds make. A skilled carpenter could not do it so well. If you look carefully at the trees in the grove in your village, you will find that many of these have neat round holes cut into them. These are all holes that have been made by a woodpecker or a barbet. Barbets are described in chapter X.

The time to look for woodpeckers cutting out their nests is during March and April.

Three pure white eggs are laid.

I must now say a few words about the other two woodpeckers found in my village. One is about the size of a myna. Its plumage is mainly black and white, the wings being black with white spots and the back white with dark bands and spots. The cock has a red crest on his head and a yellow patch of feathers on the forehead. The head of the hen is dull yellow. This bird is called the yellow-fronted pied woodpecker. There are other pied woodpeckers with different coloured foreheads, but these are not found in my village. The third woodpecker is smaller than a sparrow

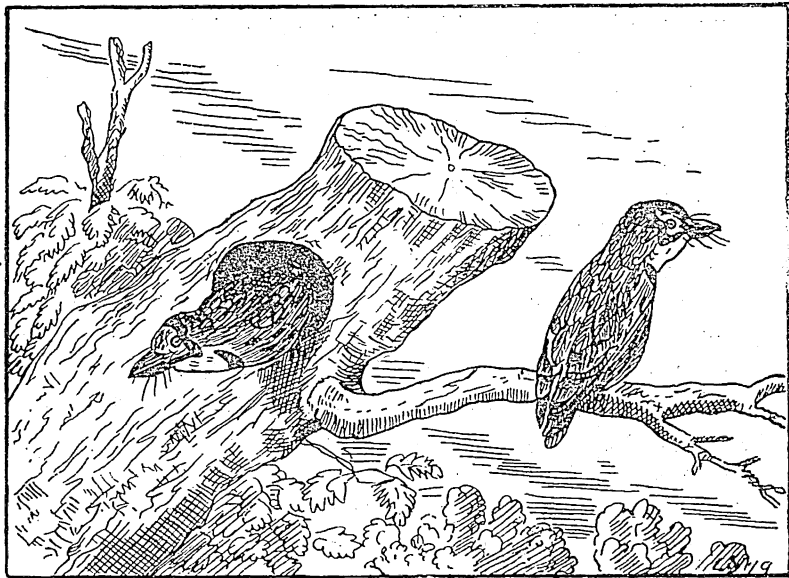
(*Gauriya*). It is brown and white, being marked much like the pied bird. The cock has two stripes of red in his head. This tiny bird is called the Pigmy Woodpecker (*Baumna Kathphuria*). It sometimes goes about in flocks and often perches on branches—a thing which the bigger ones never do. All three birds make the same kind of nest, but of course, the holes vary with the size of the bird.

X

Barbets

WE have seen how wonderfully the Woodpeckers cut their nest holes in the trunks of the trees. There are two other birds found in every village in the United Provinces which make similar nests. These are Barbets or *bassuntas*. The Green Barbet or *bara bassunta* is nearly as big as a *myna*. It is a bright green bird with a yellowish brown head and an orange patch of bare skin round the eye. Both the cock and the hen are dressed alike. The bill is thick and of the same colour as the head. This bird, like the woodpecker, keeps to groves. You may not have noticed it with your eyes, but its loud noise must be well known to you. It is heard all day long except when the weather is very cold. First you hear a kind of hoarse laugh, which is followed by a loud 'kutur,' 'kutur,' 'kutur' repeated perhaps a hundred times. The Barbet does not often descend to the ground, but frequently flies from tree to tree. You can locate the bird by its cry. If you cannot see it among the thick foliage, you can make it fly away by throwing a stone into the tree, and then you will be able to see it. The other barbet is called the Coppersmith or *chhota bassunta* or *tambayat*. It is much smaller than the Green Barbet, being

no larger than a sparrow. The feathers of the body, wings and tail are yellowish green, but the head and throat are very brightly coloured. The forehead and part of the neck are crimson. The chin, throat and a patch above and below the eye are bright yellow. A black band runs from the bill



Coppersmiths and nest

to the side of the neck and from there to the top of the head. The bill is black and the legs bright red. When once you have seen this bird you cannot mistake it. But as it keeps chiefly to the top of trees it is not always easy to see the bird. Like the big barbet it has a very distinctive call, which is heard all day long in every mango grove in the hot weather and indeed at all times except in very cold weather. This sounds like 'tonk,' 'tonk,' 'tonk,' 'tonk' repeated for

five or ten minutes and has been compared to the sound made by a coppersmith (*thathera*) when beating his copper to the desired shape. Both kinds of barbets feed generally on *pipal* figs and other fruits, but they also eat insects.

The nesting season for both kinds is March, April and May. They usually dig out the nest hole in a branch of a tree, not the trunk. Often the branch is not very high up. Care is always taken that the entrance to the nest does not face upwards. If it did, the young ones might get drowned in heavy rain. Barbets usually select as a site for the nest a branch of which the inside is hollow owing to decay. But they do not always choose a hollow branch and then they have to dig out the nest chamber as well as the passage leading to it. The passage is just as neatly rounded as that cut by the woodpecker and in the case of the coppersmith the circumference is about the size of a rupee. As soon as the outer hard bark is broken through, the bird seems to find little difficulty in chipping off the softer wood inside. The beak is different from that of the woodpecker, being much thicker and ending in a sharp point. Like most birds that nest in holes, barbets are not shy when working at the nest and will let you come quite close enough to see well what they are doing. When the nest is ready, two, three or four white eggs are laid. Sometimes the same nest is used for two years running and, after the young ones have left it, it is still used as a place in which the barbets sleep. By watching the barbets in your village at sunset you will perhaps be able to discover where they spend the night.

XI.

Mynas. — I.

THE mynas are birds with which every one is familiar. There are many kinds of myna in India and of those seven are found in my village.

- (1) The common myna or the *Maina* or *Desi Maina*.
- (2) The bank myna or *Ganga* or *Daria Maina*.
- (3) The pied myna or *Ablaq Maina*.
- (4) The black-headed myna or *Pawai* or *Popya*.
- (5) The grey-headed myna or *Pawai*.
- (6) The rose-coloured starling or *Gulabi Maina*.
- (7) The Indian starling or *Teliya Maina*.

For the benefit of those who do not know each kind of myna I will describe them. The common myna is a brown bird with a black head. The bill, a patch of skin round the eye, and the legs are bright yellow. There is a white bar on the wing which is very conspicuous when the bird flies.

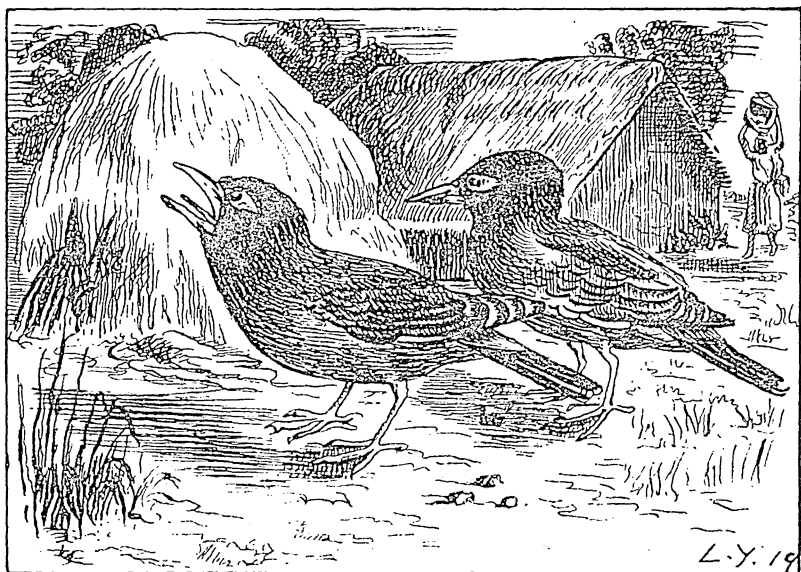
The bank myna is a dark grey bird with black head and neck. The legs are yellow; the bill is dark yellow and the patch of skin round the eye is bright red. The wing bar is yellowish pink.

The pied myna is a black bird with white cheeks and some white in the wings and tail. The tip of the bill is white and the rest deep orange yellow.

The black-headed myna is a grey bird with a silky black head and crest. The crest does not stand erect, but lies flat on the back of the bird's neck. The breast is of the colour of rust. The legs are bright yellow.

The grey-headed myna is like the black-headed one except that the head and neck are pale grey instead of black.

The rose-coloured starling is a very handsome bird. The head, breast, wings and tail are glossy black, while the remainder of the plumage is pink, rose-coloured in some birds, and so dull as to be almost earth-coloured in others. The



Common Mynas

older the bird grows, the more pronounced does the pink become.

The Indian Starling is a bird with glossy black plumage on which there are a number of brown spots which you will not notice unless you get close to the bird.

If you look out for them you will have no difficulty in finding the first four mynas because they occur in every village and secure their food on the ground, their food being chiefly grasshoppers. They come fearlessly out into the

open. The bank and the pied mynas are found in damp places, and if there is a tank near your village, you are likely to see these birds feeding near the water or in damp irrigation channels, but you will see them also in dry places. The common, the bank and the pied mynas usually go about in flocks. The black-headed myna does so sometimes. The grey-headed bird is not nearly so common as the others and it rarely descends to the ground. So you will have to look carefully if you wish to see it. The rose-coloured and the Indian starlings keep in flocks, but they do not live in India throughout the year. You will probably see the rose-coloured starlings only in the spring and autumn and the Indian starling only in winter.

XII

Mynas.—II.

If you keep a sharp look-out, you will be able to find the nests of the common myna, the black-headed myna, the bank myna and the pied myna. The common myna nests in holes in trees, houses, walls or wells. Most of the nests are in holes in trees, usually in those that have been occupied by woodpeckers. The nest is a collection of grass, rags, sticks, feathers and paper. Like that of the sparrow the nest is usually so untidy that often pieces of it stick out of the entrance hole. Mynas take a long time to make their nests. You will often see them carrying material to the hole in April and May, but they do not, as a rule, lay their eggs until the rains have begun. Four beautiful blue eggs are laid.

The bank myna makes the same kind of nest as the common myna, but it always lays its eggs in a hole which it makes in a sand bank or *kachcha* well. They often nest in

colonies. It is difficult to see a nest when it is in a well. If you would get a good view of the nest you should go to the nearest river which has a high sandy bank, and if you walk along this at the right season, i. e. from the middle of April to the middle of July, you are likely to come across a part of the bank riddled with holes. If the holes are small ones, about 2 inches in diameter, they are probably those of sand martins — birds of which I will speak later. If the diameter of the hole is about 3 inches they are the nest holes of bank mynas. The passage leading to the egg chamber is usually from four to seven feet long. The egg chamber is like a large hollow ball. In this are placed grass, feathers, snake skin, rags and papers. On this five glossy blue eggs are laid.

The pied myna makes a nest quite unlike those of the common and bank mynas. It builds in the early part of the rains, not very high up in a tree, a very large nest composed of twigs, grass, straw, rags and feathers. No attempt is made to hide the nest and you can see it from a long distance. The eggs, like those of all other mynas, are blue.

The black-headed myna breeds from May to June in holes in trees, sometimes in buildings. The bird does not itself make the hole, but uses one it finds ready-made — sometimes that of a barbet. Into this it carries a few leaves and feathers and then lays its eggs which are pale blue.

The grey-headed myna nests in a hole in a tree just as the black-headed bird does. You will not see the nest of either the rosy or the common starling in your village, because these birds do not breed in India. They go a long way off, thousands of miles, to bring up their families.

If you make a point of looking at the birds in your village daily, or even once a month, you will find that there are some birds such as crows, parrots and woodpeckers which you will see at all seasons of the year: there are others such

as the starling that you will see only in the winter months. A few you may see only in the hot weather and rains. Some birds seem never to move about but to keep to one part of the country all the year round. Others are great travellers. Some of these move about at all times. Others spend half the year in one place and the other half at another place — a long way off. The birds that move from place to place are called migratory birds. In India the weather is never very cold so that insect-eating birds can find food all the year round. In countries further north, such as England and Tibet, the weather in winter is so cold that very few insects are found. The consequence is that many insect-eating birds that dwell in those countries have, at the beginning of the winter, to fly south to warmer countries to get food. Many of the birds which live in colder countries come to India for the winter, where they can find plenty of food. When the days begin to get hot, they fly back to their northern homes, where the heat of the sun is not so great, and rear their young ones and come back to the warmer climate when the cold days begin.

The Indian starling is a bird that behaves thus, and this is why you will see it in your village only in winter. Other birds that visit India in winter are redstarts (*thirithira* or *lalgonda*), some wagtails (*dhobin*) and most of the ducks. These breed either in the Himalayas or the countries beyond them. When the autumn comes you must look out for the birds that visit India in the winter. I will talk to you about these later.

The rosy starling breeds in Asia Minor. It does not go so far away from India or stay so long as the Indian starling does. It is very fond of grain and does much damage to the crops, but it also eats locusts and grasshoppers and so does some good in return for the grain it eats. You are most likely to see the rose-coloured starling in your village when

the *rabi* or the *kharif* crops are ripening. They come in flocks of several hundreds and feed in the morning and late afternoon. They spend the middle of the day in trees where they make a great noise. The Indian starling feeds largely on insects which it finds in fields from which the crops have been removed. Like most of the other mynas it goes about in flocks, and when a company sit in a tree it makes much noise.

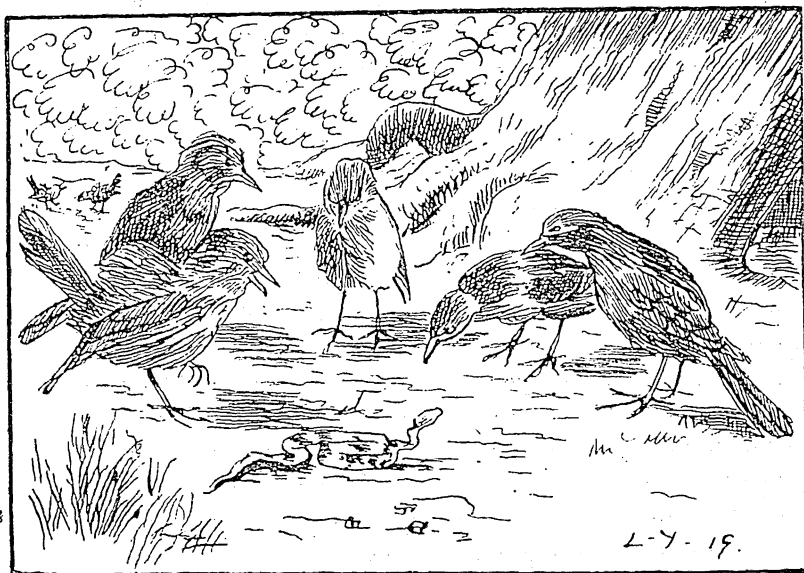
XIII

Babblers or Seven Sisters

THOSE curious birds about the size of mynas of which the plumage is the colour of earth, and which invariably go about in flocks and for this reason are called 'seven sisters,' must be familiar to every villager. They are untidy-looking birds. The tail seems so loosely put in that it may at any time fall out. It is darker than the rest of the body. Babblers feed chiefly on the ground picking up insects, and they are fond of rummaging among dead leaves. They are very noisy birds and this is why the English call them 'Babblers.' Their notes are as harsh and displeasing as the grunt of a buffalo, being of the nature of squeaks. Birds that go about in flocks usually keep up a kind of chatter. This is not conversational, but it is done to keep the members of the flock together. When one of a flock is busily seeking food, hopping from bush to bush, it often finds itself at a distance from its companions. It looks round and cannot see any of them, but it hears their calls and is therefore able to rejoin them. Birds, I think, cannot talk like human beings. They have no real language, but they can utter a limited number of sounds to express anger, pleasure and fear. The song of birds is a way of showing their happiness. Birds lead happy

lives, because they have no cares, enjoy good health and usually have plenty of food.

Have you noticed how feeble the flight of the seven sisters is, how rapidly they have to move their weak wings



Seven Sisters or Jungle Babblers

in order to progress? I do not think that a babbler can fly for a half mile without resting. It never attempts such a thing; thirty or forty yards is about the farthest it flies. Babblers move about on the ground by a series of hops or jumps and move much faster than birds like mynas which run. The flocks of babblers usually seem to consist of from eight to twelve members.

They cannot be mother, father and children because not more than four eggs are laid. I do not quite know how these parties are made up, but I believe that the same party

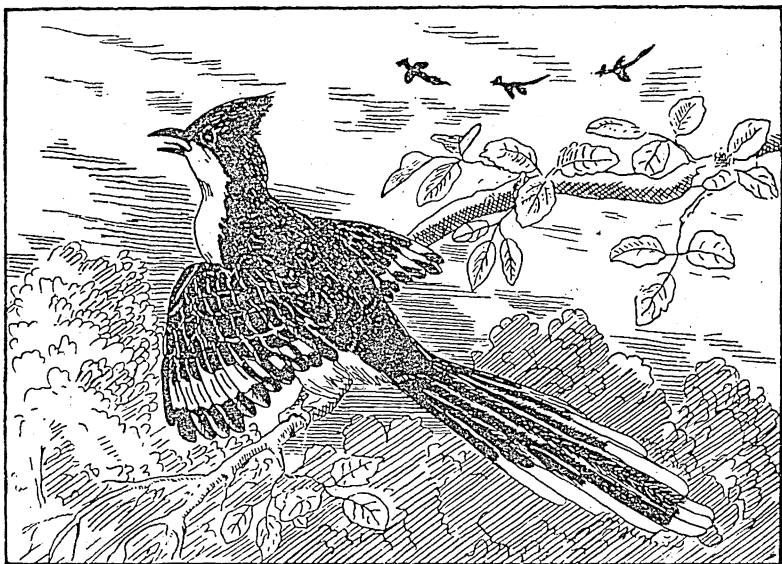
lives together for some years. At Fyzabad I used to see for two years a flock which contained one babbler whose plumage was white. Each flock roosts together; the members sit in a row and huddle closely together, some facing one way, others the other, on one of the lower branches of a tree. If you watch the babblers in your village, you will find out where they sleep. The parties do not break up even in the nesting season which is at the beginning of the rains. Two of the company build a rather loosely constructed cup-shaped nest composed of grass stems and fine roots. The nest is placed in a tree, shrub or hedge. *Nim* trees are usually selected. The nest is usually not very high above the ground. From four to ten feet is the average height. Three or four beautiful shining blue eggs are laid. Sometimes a larger number of eggs is found in a nest. This may be due to one of two causes. Either two pairs of babblers may lay in the same nest, or one of the cuckoos which are parasitic may have laid eggs in the nest. Babblers are such friendly birds that it is not surprising that two pairs should use the same nest. It often happens that young birds are fed by those who are not their parents.

There is another kind of babbler common in India which you may see in your village. This is called the large grey babbler or *gangai*. It is larger than the seven sisters and has a longer tail. The two outer feathers are almost white. These are folded up under the middle feathers when the bird is sitting or walking, but they open it out when it flies. They make it easy to identify the bird. Its call is quite different from that of the seven sisters. It is a loud *quey, quey, quey*. The habits of this species are like those of the *Sath Bhai*. The nest and eggs are similar. The nest is usually built in a *babul* tree. In the next chapter we will talk about the cuckoos that lay their eggs in babblers' nests.

XIV

The Hawk-Cuckoo or Brain-Fever-Bird

WE have already talked about the koel which lays its eggs in crows' nests. There are two other cuckoos found in



The Pied Crested Cuckoo

my village and these must also come to yours. These lay their eggs in the nests of the two kinds of babblers we spoke about in the last chapter. The more common of these cuckoos is the Brain-Fever-Bird or Hawk-Cuckoo or *popiya*. It is about the size of a shikra and very much like a shikra in appearance. Its plumage is soft grayish brown with numbers of white little bars. The eyes and legs are bright yellow.

You may perhaps have not seen this bird, but you must often have heard it calling. Its call sounds like *popiya*. It keeps on screaming *popiya*, each *popiya* being louder and shriller than the last until you think that the bird will burst! The *popiya* calls at night as well as in the day time and I often wonder when the bird sleeps. Hawk-cuckoos keep to trees and do not often come to the ground. They feed on caterpillars and insects, but are very fond of figs and other fruits.

The second cuckoo is a very handsome bird. He is called the pied crested-cuckoo or *kala popiya*. The whole of the upper plumage, including the large crest, is glossy black. The lower parts are white and there is a white bar in each wing and the tail is also tipped with white. This bird comes to the United Provinces only in the rains. At other times of the year it lives in South India. As soon as the rains have set in, you will see this beautiful bird and you will also hear its very curious note which I cannot find words to describe. Both these cuckoos lay blue eggs, the same colour as those of the seven sisters in whose nests they lay their eggs. Some people think that the eggs are blue so that the babblers will not recognise the strange egg, but this does not seem necessary because the crow, which is a much cleverer bird, does not notice the koel's egg which is neither the colour nor the size of the crow's egg. The babblers are smaller birds than cuckoos, so the latter have not to resort to a trick to get their eggs into the nest as the koel has to do. They just fly up to the nest and drop the egg in it. If you look out carefully in July, August or September, you are likely to see the seven sisters feeding both their own young and a young cuckoo. The young brain-fever-bird can easily be recognised by its bright yellow legs and feet. The young pied cuckoo has brown

plumage but a yellow wing bar will enable you to distinguish it from a young babbler. You will be amused to see the smaller babbler feed the much larger young cuckoo which follows its foster parents about, fluttering its wings and clamouring for food.

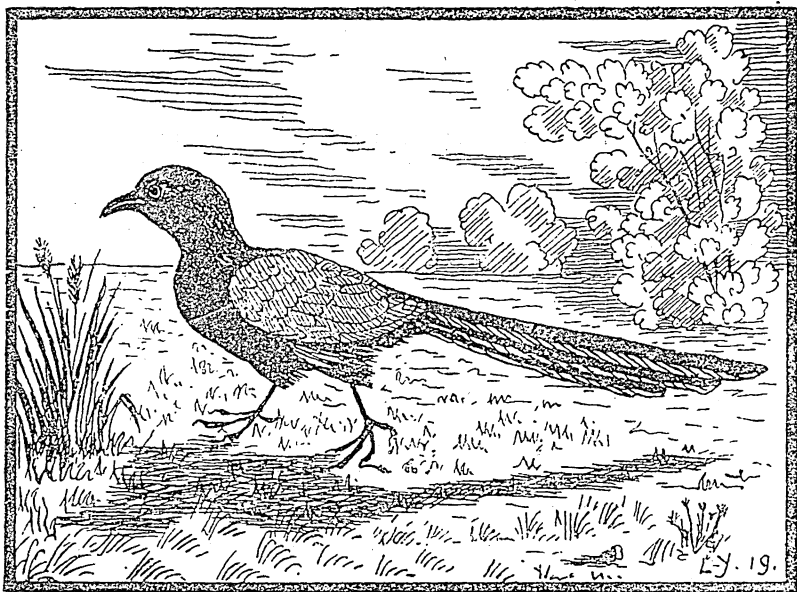
XV

The Crow-pheasant or Coucal

You must know very well the *mohok*. It is a bird bigger than a pigeon with a much longer tail. It has rather long legs and small wings for its size. Its head, body and tail are black and its wings are reddish brown. It has a bright red eye. If there is a clump of bamboos near your village or a mango grove, there will be Crow-pheasants in these. Just before it is getting light, and often during the day time, you must have heard a curious sound like *hoot, hoot, hoot*. This comes from one tree and then from another comes the answer—the same *hoot, hoot, hoot*. This is the call of the crow-pheasant. Sometimes the bird emits a curious note like *kok, kok, kok*.

Coucals belong to the same family as the *koel*; but unlike the *koel* they build their own nests. Crow-pheasants live chiefly on insects, but they also eat lizards and small snakes. They pick up much of their food from the ground and are fond of ground which is damp, such as parts of a tank which are drying up. They also secure insects in trees and you may see these birds jumping about in trees in much the same way as squirrels do. At the end of the hot weather they mate and build their nests. When about to mate they become very noisy and the males spread out their great tails and wings and dance about in front of the females.

As the bird is large, it builds a big nest. This is sometimes placed in a bamboo clump, sometimes high up in a tamarind or other tree. When it is in the middle of bamboos it is difficult to see, but when in a tree you can



The Coucal or Crow-pheasant

easily see it. The nest is made chiefly of twigs and leaves of *nim*, *jamun*, *dhak*, and other trees. It looks like a great ball because it is often covered, having a hole on one side for the entrance. Some nests, however, have not any roof to them, but are just big hollow cups. June and July are the months in which you are likely to see most nests. Four white eggs are laid. The young ones remain in the nest for sometime after they are hatched and do not leave it until they are nearly as big as their parents. When they

leave the nest, their black feathers usually have some white bars in them. August and September are the months in which you are most likely to see young crow-pheasants.

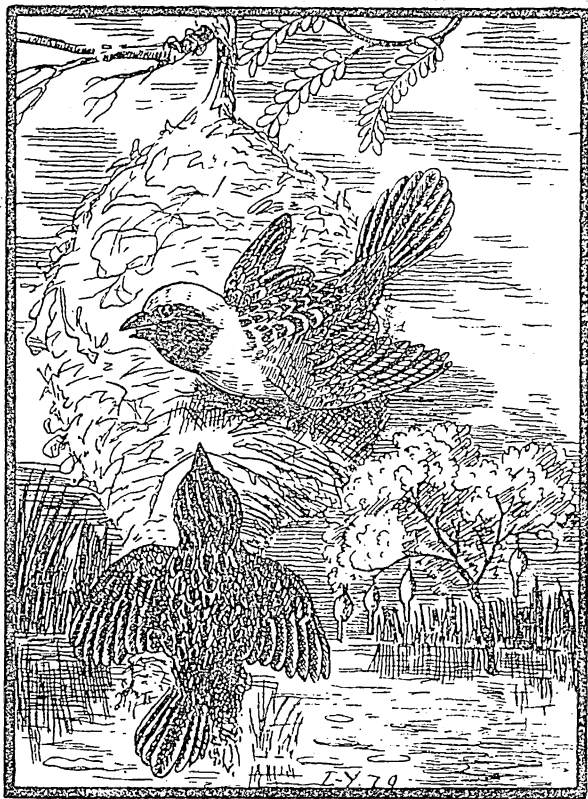
Crow-pheasants do not go about in flocks, but usually keep in pairs, and, as soon as the young ones are big enough to look after themselves, they are driven away and have to find some place in which to live. This habit is common among birds. So long as the parents have eggs or young ones in the nest, they take great care of them, and after the young leave the nest, until they are big enough to look after themselves, the parents tend them very carefully and will often fight to protect them, but when it becomes no longer necessary for the parents to protect the young birds, the former obey their natural instinct which is to look after themselves and to fight with other birds for food.

XVI

The Weaver-bird or *Baya*

Most people are familiar with the wonderful nests of the Weaver-bird or *baya*. You must often have seen them hanging from palm or other trees looking like great bottles made of basket-work. I wonder whether you have ever watched the birds making these nests. It is quite easy to do so because the nests are placed in conspicuous places and the birds are not shy. At most seasons of the year both the cock and the hen *baya* are birds with dull reddish brown plumage and a faint white eye-brow. Indeed, they might easily be mistaken for hen sparrows (*gauriya*) because they have not only similar colouring, but the same squat figure and thick bill. I may here say that a thick bill like that of the sparrow denotes that the bird lives largely on

grain. This kind of bill enables the bird to husk the grain. In the hot weather the head, neck and breast of the male



Cock and Hen Weaver-birds at the Nest

baya become a beautiful golden yellow while the chin becomes black. When he is in his breeding plumage the cock bird is very easy to recognise. The *baya* is easily tamed if caught young and can be taught tricks such as to fly to its master's mouth and take a seed from between his lips, but

the making of its nest is more wonderful than any trick you can teach it. If you pull down an old nest and examine it, you will find it that it is made of thin strips torn from coarse grass. These strips are woven together in a most intricate manner. You will find that the nest, although large, weighs very little and I think that the reason that the bird usually puts some clumps of clay on to the nest, is to prevent it getting too much shaken by the strong winds that blow during the monsoon when the bird nests. The nest is a round chamber with a stalk by which it is attached to the tree from which it hangs. The chamber is divided into two equal parts. One has a bottom on which the eggs are laid. The other has no bottom but is prolonged into a tube frayed at the end. This is the entrance to the nest. Thus, in order to get into the nest the bird has to fly to it from below. This is not easy for even a bird to do. The *baya* manages it quite easily; but crows, tree-pies, squirrels and snakes are unable to get into the nest. *Bayas* usually nest in company and you are likely to see 8 or 10 nests hanging from one tree. You will notice that some of these are never finished. In these no bottom or tube is given to the circular chamber. It is thus like a small umbrella with a bar across the bottom. Indians call these unfinished nests *jhulas* or swings and they believe that the cock makes this *jhula* in order that he may sit in it and sing to the hen while she is sitting on the eggs. This idea may be correct, but I do not think that there are as many *jhulas* as there are completed nests. It may be that a *jhula* is a half-finished nest which is left by the birds because they are not satisfied with the way it is hanging, or it may be that, after the proper nest is finished, the cock bird makes a *jhula* to amuse himself. If you keep *bayas* in a cage and give them plenty of grass they will often begin to weave the nest.

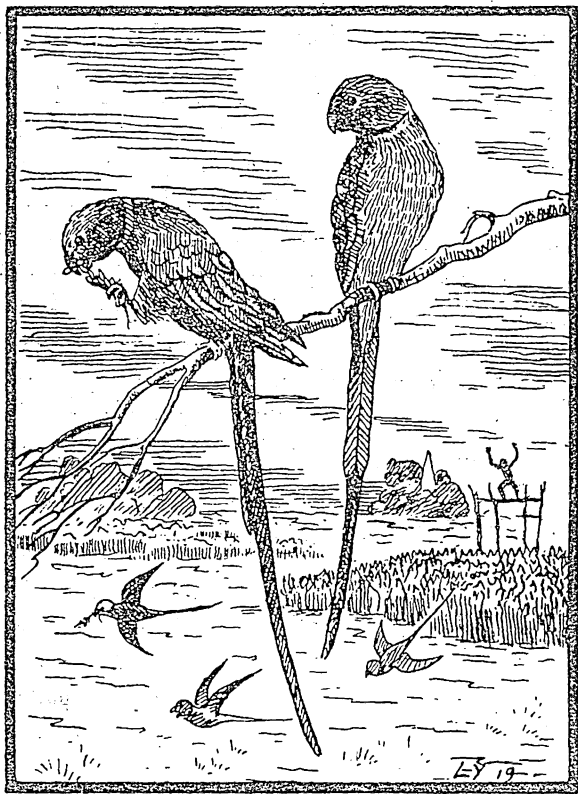
There is no doubt that *bayas* take much pleasure in weaving. I have said that I believe the lumps of clay which you will find in almost every nest are put there to keep the nest from being blown about by the wind, but the Indians say that these lumps of clay are candle-sticks and that the birds stick living fire-flies into these to light the nest at night. I do not believe this. I have often looked for living fire-flies on the nests, but have never seen them. I think that the lumps of clay when first put on, being wet, sometimes glisten in the moonlight and so are mistaken for fire-flies. By going out on moonlight nights and looking at the nests in your village during the breeding season, you can find out whether any of them have living fire-flies stuck into them. As soon as the fire-fly is dead his light goes out. If you do come across any living fire-flies stuck into these lumps of clay, I hope you will write to me and say so. I have often asked people to write, but have never received a letter. Therefore I do not believe the fire-fly story. To describe to you exactly how the birds weave their wonderful nest would take up too much space, and it is a thing that you can easily watch for yourself in August. You should notice how the birds tear strips from long elephant-grass which they use for the nest. You should mark how excited the birds get when they are weaving their nests, also the fights that sometimes take place.

XVII

Paroquets or Green Parrots

EVERYONE has seen parrots in cages, for many people keep them as pets, and all observant people have seen them in their villages. If you have had to protect crops from

being eaten by birds you must be familiar with the green parrot, for, next to the crow, he is more injurious than any other bird to the ripening grain. Parrots are very beautiful



Rose-ringed Paroquets

birds. There are two kinds found in most villages in the United Provinces: the *tota* or rose-ringed paroquet and the *lalsira tota* or blossom-headed paroquet. The ordinary *tota* is by far the most common. Its plumage is beautiful bright

green, but there are many other colours in it. The long tail feathers have some blue and yellow in them. The curious beak is bright red, there is a black patch on the chin; on the male bird only is a rose-coloured collar round the back of his neck. In the hen this collar is of a lighter green than the rest of the plumage. The male also has a thin black line that runs from his nostril to the eye. The *lalsira tota* is a somewhat smaller bird and differs from the ordinary *tota* in that the cock has the head a reddish blue colour, something of the hue of the *jaman* fruit, but much paler. In the hen the head is grey. Another feature which distinguishes this bird from the common parrot is a red patch on the wings in both the cock and the hen. The cock has also a black collar. Whenever you see a flock of parrots you should try to notice to which kind the birds belong. Parrots go about in flocks, sometimes, large flocks, but generally four or five together. They fly very fast indeed, and during flight the great head and long tail are very easy to see. When flying, the birds utter their curious cries with which you must be familiar.) The cry of the blossom-headed paroquet is less harsh than that of the rose-winged bird. (Parrots live exclusively on fruit and grain and, as we have seen, they do a lot of harm to the cultivator by robbing him of his grain and fruit. At night all the parrots of a locality assemble together and roost in one or two trees.) (Parrots lay their eggs in holes in trees or buildings. They often use a natural hole in a tree or the hole which has been deserted by some other kind of bird.) The rose-ringed paroquet lays generally in March, and the *lalsira tota* in April. Four white eggs are laid. The bird-catchers watch where a bird's nest is, and when the young ones are nearly ready to leave the nest, they capture them to sell in the bazaar as cage birds. Young parrots have the tail much

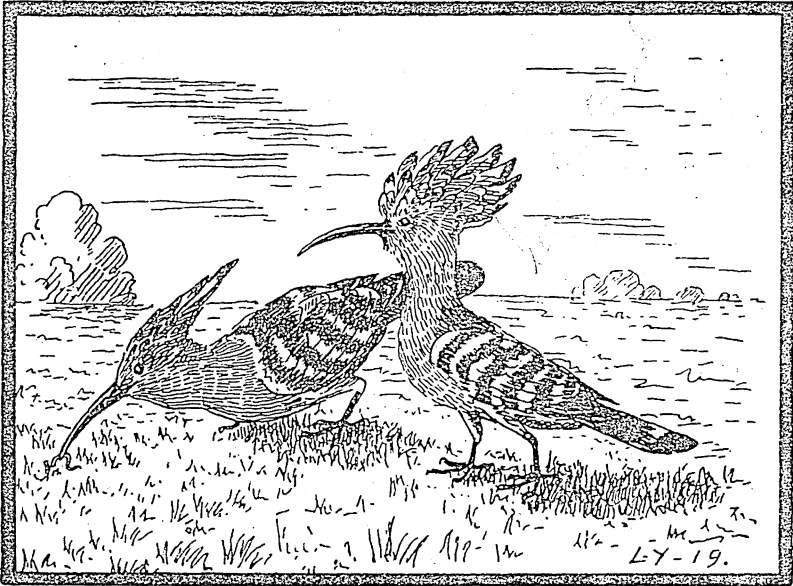
shorter than their parents, so you can easily recognise them. Parrots are favourite cage birds because they are easy to feed and many of them learn to talk and imitate sounds. Parrots make very amusing pets and become very tame indeed. They are usually kept in iron cages and people who keep parrots should be careful not to put the cage in the sun because the iron gets very hot and must be very uncomfortable to live in. The reason why parrots are kept in iron cages is that their powerful beaks enable them to bite through the bars of a wooden one in a very short time. It is said that parrots sometimes cut out their nests in trees just as wood-peckers and barbets do, but I have not seen the parrot do this.

XVIII

The Hoopoe

THE hoopoe is a very beautiful and striking bird. His bill is long and slender and slightly curved. His head, neck and shoulders are a sandy brown colour. The wings are black with bold white bars across them. The most striking thing about the hoopoe is the crest. When the bird walks about on the ground this is folded up and projects behind the head. When the bird is surprised, and always as it alights after flight, the crest expands into a beautiful fan. This is the same colour as the head, but each feather is tipped with black. Some birds have a little white in the crest. The hoopoe finds its food on the ground. It digs into the earth with its long bill and pulls out insects and other creatures which hide themselves there. The hoopoe does not eat fruit or vegetables or grass. Perhaps you have noticed a hoopoe having a bath. Like a fowl it bathes;

not in water, but in dust. You must often have noticed how fowls like to go to a dusty place, crouch there, ruffle up their feathers and rub themselves in dust. In this way they get rid of ticks and other tiny creatures which live in their plumage and suck their blood just as fleas feed on the



Hoopoes

blood of men, dogs and rats. Birds are very clean in their habits. Every day they either bathe in water or take a dust bath as the hoopoe does. Birds that use water to clean themselves usually bathe in very shallow water. They crouch in this, ruffle their feathers and shake the water over their bodies with their wings. If you care to look, you will often see mynas, crows and other birds bathing.

The hoopoe is not a very strong flier, but it is very clever in the air and birds of prey find it very difficult to catch a hoopoe because of its trick of jerking sideways when a bird flies at it to attack it. During the greater part of the year hoopoes utter their soft rather musical note which sounds like *ook, ook, ook*. It is doubtless in imitation of the call that the Indians call this bird the *hudhud*.

The nesting habits of hoopoes are interesting. Hoopoes always nest in holes, sometimes in trees, more usually in buildings. Often the eggs are laid in a hole in the mud-wall of a house. Although the hoopoe is nearly as large as a myna, it can squeeze itself through a very tiny opening. It always chooses a hole with a small opening to prevent crows and tree-pies getting into the nest to take the eggs. Four or five white or milk-coloured eggs are laid. After the eggs are laid, the hen enters the nest and sits on the eggs till the young ones come out. She seems never to leave the nest. The cock brings her food while she is sitting. If you look during the months of March, April and May, you will certainly see the cock hoopoe feeding the hen through the hole that leads to the nest.

As soon as the young ones are hatched the hen comes out and helps her mate to find caterpillars and other soft food for the young birds. Young hoopoes when they leave the nest are very like their parents, but are smaller and the white on the wings looks rather dirty. After the young ones have left the nest, the parents continue to bring them food and you will sometimes see a young bird standing on the ground being fed by its parents. Young hoopoes, however, soon learn to find food for themselves. As soon as they can do this, the hen lays another set of eggs. Hoopoes bring up two broods in the year. Muhammadan doctors tell us that the flesh of the hoopoe cures many

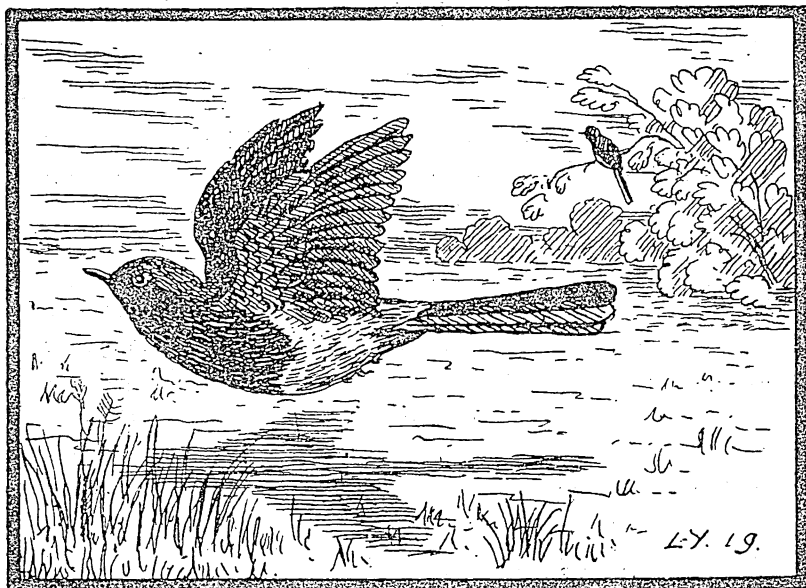
ailments. I do not know whether this is true. The hoopoe is such a pretty and useful bird that it seems a great pity to kill it.

XIX

The Redstart

As I have stated, some birds, like many people who live in villages, remain in one locality all their lives and rear up their young ones there; others wander about a good deal. The pied crested cuckoo which comes to us every rains is an example of a bird that moves about with the seasons. Some birds that feed on insects are born in northern countries such as England. Such birds are hatched out in the spring when the climate is warm and there is plenty of insect food to be found. These enjoy the mild summer, but later when the autumn comes, most insects die and those that are left hide themselves in holes so that the birds that feed on them find it difficult to obtain food. This lack of food compels them to take to their wings and fly very long distances to countries further south where the winter is warm enough to enable insects to live in the open. Such birds often take a journey of more than 500 *kos*. These long flights from one country to another are called migrations and the birds that take them are called migratory birds. Of course the birds do not do the whole of their long journey in one flight, they often stop to rest on the way, but 150 *kos* at a flight is quite a usual thing. Most migratory birds can fly at the rate of 20 *kos* an hour so that by flying steadily for 8 hours they can cover a distance of 160 *kos*. Many insect-eating birds which spend the summer in England go to Africa for the winter; and if you look at the map, you will see that

these have to fly across the Mediterranean Sea. Once when I was on this sea in a ship, some of these migrating birds alighted on the ship to take a rest. Migratory birds that pass the winter in India have to fly over the Himalaya



The Redstart

mountains to their breeding grounds in Tibet, China and Russia. They do not fly over the highest mountains, but cross them by what are known as passes in the mountains, that is to say, spaces between the higher hills. Many Indian birds when migrating follow the course of the Brahmaputra river. Migrating birds always fly at night and they usually select a night when there is much moonlight. If you keep a look out in the latter part of the month of September, you will see one morning some birds that you

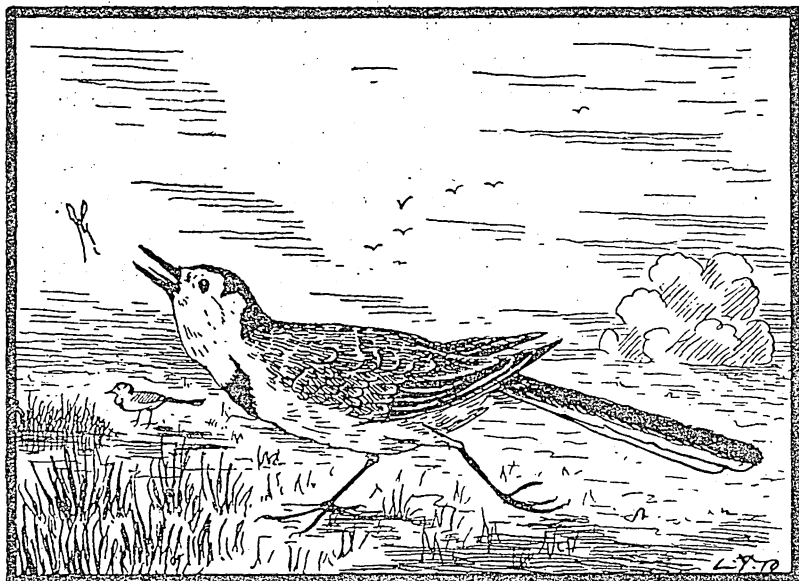
have not seen since last April. Some of these birds are almost black, some are brown, all have the tail dark red. When the bird is perched, the tail is largely covered by the wings, so that the red tail is not very conspicuous; but when the bird takes to its wings the expanded tail is very noticeable. This bird is called by the English the Redstart or Fire-tail, start being an old English name for tail. Indians call this bird *lal gonda* or the *thir thira*. Its tail keeps bobbing slowly up and down. The dark birds are the cocks and the brown ones the hens. They are about the size of a sparrow or *gauriya*. Two or three are likely to spend the winter in your village. They have not much song and are quiet birds. They feed on insects and dwell in bushes, coming out to the open to secure their food on the ground. It is no good for you to look for their nests because they do not breed in the plains of India. You might however try to find out where they sleep at night. I think they roost in holes in walls. You will see the Redstarts in your village all through the winter, but one April morning you will wake up and find that they have gone, and from the time that you have seen the last Redstart it is no use looking for the bird until after the middle of September.

XX

Wagtails

WE have seen that Redstarts are birds that spend the cold weather in India and go over the Himalayas to breed. They are not the only birds that do this. A few days before the Redstarts arrive, the Wagtails come to my village, and this must also be the case in your village. The comings

and goings of migratory birds are as regular as the seasons. If you keep a note of the days on which you notice migrants arrive you will find that the date varies only by a few days each year. The Wagtail or *dhobin* is a very graceful bird.



The White Wagtail

It is about the size of a sparrow—*gauriya*. The body is long and thin and the tail is rather long. The tail is constantly moved up and down. This is why the English call the bird the Wagtail. Wagtails feed on tiny insects which they pick off damp ground. If there be a *jhil* near your village, you will almost certainly see during the winter Wagtails feeding on the wet ground near the water. Wagtails often occur in small flocks. When they fly, their line of flight is undulating, that is to say, the birds rise and fall in

the air. At least two different kinds of Wagtail visit my village every winter. One kind is grayish green above and as yellow as the mustard flower below. This is called the gray Wagtail by the English. You might think that the yellow Wagtail would be a better name, but as there are many other kinds of Wagtails that have yellow underparts, this bird is not called the yellow Wagtail. The other Wagtail that visits my village in large numbers is called the white Wagtail by the English. It is not a pure white bird. The lower parts are white and there is much white in the head, wings and tail. There is some black on the head and throat. The rest of the plumage is gray. I cannot give a very detailed description of these Wagtails because they keep changing their colour. You may wonder how they do this. A bird's feathers are its clothes. As you know very well, your clothes do not last for ever. After a time they get worn out and you have to buy new ones. A bird's feathers do not last for ever; indeed they do not last so long as your *dhotee* or *paijamas*. Every bird changes its feathers at least once a year. All change at the beginning of the cold weather just as you put on warmer clothes. Some birds change their feathers in spring as well as in the autumn. They do not change them all at once, but six or seven at a time. New feathers grow and the old and worn ones drop out. This change of feather is called moulting. You may perhaps have seen a crow or myna looking very ragged and miserable, especially at the neck where the feathers are sometimes so scarce that you can see much of the bare skin. These birds are moulting and some of the old feathers have dropped out before the new ones have grown. Now a bird's feathers overlap one another like tiles on a roof or scales on a fish. Some feathers are the same colour all over, others have the inner parts of one colour and the edges of

another. Now only the edge of the feather shows. Suppose a bird's feathers be white with black edges. When the feathers are new only the black edges show and the bird looks black, but after a time the edges get worn away and then the white middle parts begin to show. Then the bird becomes a black and white bird. This is the explanation of the changes in the colour of Wagtails. Many of the feathers are black only at the tip. After the autumn moult, or change of feathers, the bird looks black at the parts where such feathers grow. As the black tips get worn off, the white begins to show and sometimes the black altogether disappears before the spring.

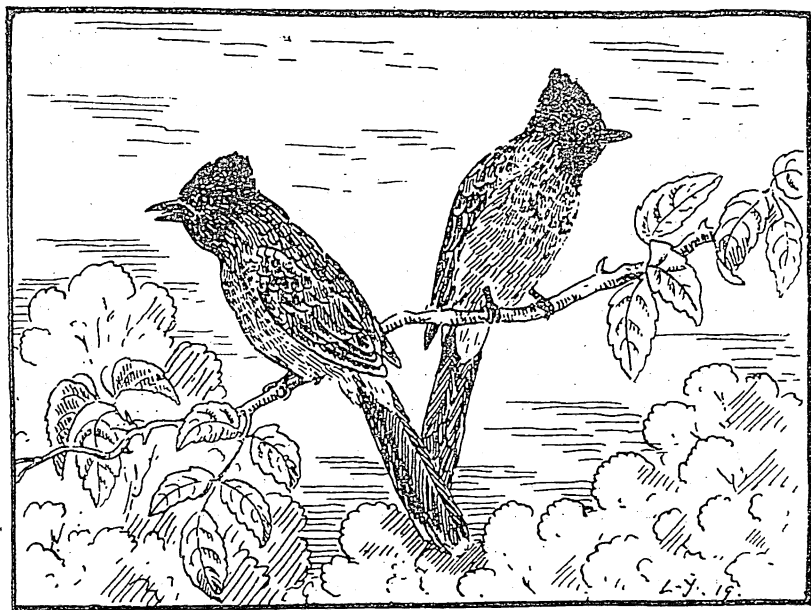
There is a third kind of Wagtail which does not occur in my village, but it may be found in yours. This Wagtail is interesting because it does not migrate. It is called the large pied Wagtail. The lower parts are white, as are the outer tail feathers and eye-brow. There is also some white in the wings. The rest of the plumage is black.

This bird has a very sweet song. It is usually found near water. It nests from March to May. The nest is a big cup of grass, rags, feathers and hair placed in some hole in a bridge or a country boat or any other spot near water. If there is a bridge of boats near your village, you will probably find a nest of this Wagtail in one of the boats that compose it. A pair of these birds once built their nest in a ferry boat that went across the Jumna. This boat was not often used, but when it was, the female allowed herself to be ferried across the river while sitting on her eggs. Her mate used to sit on the edge of the boat singing.

XXI

Bulbuls

THE bulbul is a bird with which you must be familiar. You have probably seen bulbuls kept as pets by people. Some men keep these pretty birds and train them to fight.



Red-vented Bulbuls

Such birds are carried about on small perches to which they are attached by a piece of string tied round the leg to keep them from flying away. I am told that sometimes as much as Rs. 500 is given for a good fighting bulbul. There are two kinds of bulbuls found in my village. One is called the red-vented bulbul, and the other the red-whiskered bulbul.

If your home is in Oudh, you are likely to see more of the red-whiskered kind in your village, but if living in Agra, you will see more of the red-vented kind. The red-vented bulbul has the whole head, with a short crest, black. The rest of the body, and the wings and tail are dark brown; each feather of the back has a pale tip. Thus the plumage has a pattern like the scales of a fish. The tail is tipped with white and there is a patch of bright red feathers under the tail which gives the bird its English name. Indians call this bird simply the bulbul or *guldum* bulbul. Perhaps in your village they call it some other name. The red-whiskered bulbul is called the *kangra* bulbul at Lucknow. In Bengal it is called the *sipahi* bulbul because of its smart appearance. Other names for it are the *kanera* or *kara* bulbul. It is a very handsome bird. The crest is much longer than that of the red-vented species and tapers off to a point which faces forward. The head and crest are black, but on each cheek there is a white and a bright red patch of feathers. This is why the bird is called the red-whiskered bulbul by the English. The chin and breast are white, and between the breast and the lower parts is a black band. The rest of the plumage is like that of the red-vented bulbul.

The habits of both kinds of bulbul are alike. They go about in pairs and I think they mate for life and not for one breeding season as many birds do. Bulbuls continually utter rather pretty notes. You can scarcely call them singing birds, but their calls are very pleasing. They feed largely on berries and other fruits. They are very fond of figs, but they also eat insects and they sometimes descend to the ground to find insect food.

The red-vented bulbul builds a slender cup-like nest. The material used is generally dry grass stems. The nest is lined with fine roots and sometimes some hair from a horse's

tail. This bulbul usually builds in a tree, sometimes it makes the nest in a low bush or plant only a little distance above the ground. The red-whiskered bulbul invariably builds its nest in bushes, plants, creepers or *munj* grass so that the nest is never high above the ground. All the nests I have seen have been from 3 to 5 feet above the ground. The nest is cup-shaped like that of the red-vented kind. It is formed of roots, twigs and grass, loosely worked together, and is lined with fine roots. Externally it is often smeared over with cobwebs and to these dried leaves, pieces of cloth and other materials sometimes become attached.

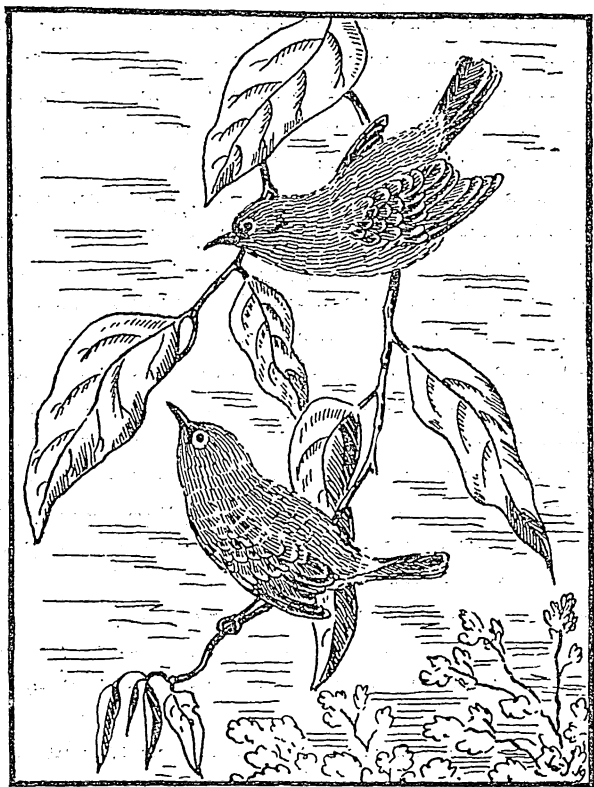
Both kinds of bulbul lay the same kind of egg. These are very pretty. The ground colour of the egg is pink or dull red and on this are numbers of specks, spots and streaks of red and brown. Three eggs are usually laid; sometimes only two are found in the nest. The breeding season is from March to September. At least two broods are reared up in the course of the breeding season. When I say are 'reared up' I mean the bird tries to rear them up. A very great number of bulbuls' eggs are destroyed and their young eaten by snakes, cats and other animals, because the bulbul builds its nest so near the ground and often in places where it can be easily seen. As soon as the eggs are destroyed, the bulbul sets about to build another nest and lay fresh eggs. Thus it happens that, although very large numbers of nests and eggs are destroyed, bulbuls are abundant all over India.

XXII

The White-eye

THERE are to be found in every mango grove at least one company of tiny little birds no longer than the middle

finger of a man. The English call these birds white-eyes or spectacle-birds for reasons which I will explain presently.



Indian White-eyes

In my village the people call them *baboona*. I do not know whether they have that name in yours. The head, chin, throat, back and shoulders are bright yellow. The lower parts are greyish white, the wings and tail are brown, the bill is black. The most conspicuous feature of these pretty

little birds is a ring of white feathers round the eye which gives the bird the appearance of wearing spectacles. It is on account of this ring of white feathers that the English call the bird the white-eye or spectacle-bird. The *baboon* has not a powerful voice, but each member of the flock keeps uttering a rather pleasing soft call. Birds that go about in company usually do this. It is by this means that they are able to keep together. White-eyes feed on tiny insects which they pick off leaves, and they spend their time flitting about from leaf to leaf examining both the top and bottom of each leaf and eating every insect they find. They wake up early in the morning, long before the sun has risen, and if you go into the mango grove near your village at dawn and listen, you will almost certainly hear the calls of a flock of these pretty little birds. You may have some difficulty in seeing them because they are so tiny and their colour is not very different from that of the leaves among which they live, but if you have a little patience, you will certainly see them. Small birds are usually not nearly so shy of man as big birds are.

Early in April the white-eyes begin to nest. At this season the cock has a very sweet song, quite as nice as that of a *lal* or red munia which you have probably heard singing in a cage.

The nest of the white-eye is a very beautiful little round basket. It is a small edition of that of the oriole or *pilak*. Indeed, the white-eye itself always seems to me to be just a tiny oriole. The nest is made of grass stems, slender roots, cotton and down from seeds. These are fastened together by cobweb which, you know, is very sticky and is used by very many birds in much the same way as a mason uses cement. The nest is lined with soft material to make it cosy. Often hair from a horse's tail is used to line the

nest, sometimes human hair which has been left lying on the ground by a barber. Usually the nest is in the fork of a branch. Sometimes it is right at the end of the branch and then resembles a ladle or spoon, the branch being the handle. The nest is small, it is not so long as a man's thumb and, as it is always built in a leafy tree, it is not easy to find. The months in which to look for it are April, May, June and July. I have not been fortunate enough to see white-eyes at work building their nest, but a gentleman who has, tells us that both birds set to work to find cobwebs by which they tie together the two branches to which they intend to attach the nest. Then the birds he watched found some fine fibres of *san* out of which they made the nest. They lined it with the down of the *madar* plant and horse's hair.

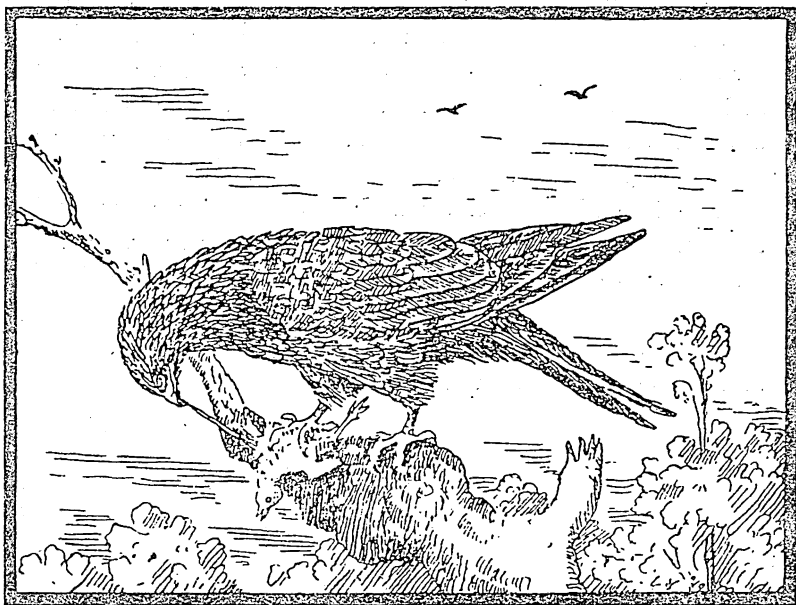
The eggs are a beautiful pale blue. Usually only two eggs are laid, but sometimes three or four.

XXIII

Kites

THE kite is so familiar a bird that detailed description is not necessary. It is mottled brown with yellow legs and is much larger than any bird I have yet described. Its beak, like that of the eagle, is made so that the bird can tear flesh to pieces. The upper chap is longer than the lower and is bent down over it like that of the parrot and ends in a sharp tip. Kites feed largely on flesh. Like crows they eat dead rats, pieces of offal and other refuse. Likewise they sometimes pounce upon and devour living animals, and, being bigger and more powerful than crows, they attack larger animals than these do and often carry away chickens.

Kites are great thieves and being clever on the wing are almost as great a nuisance as the crows are. It is not safe to carry anything eatable in a basket on the head without covering it up, because a crow or a kite is sure to see the basket and, directly the kite sees it, it will swoop down and carry away



The Kite

part of the contents of the basket in its powerful claws. The kite is a wonderful flyer. Often it soars in circles high above the earth with wings expanded. It is carried along by the force of the wind and uses its wings and tail to change its direction. The tail is rather long and is forked, that is to say the outer feathers are longer than the middle ones. The forked tail will enable you at once to distinguish the kite from any other large bird that flies high in the air,

such as an eagle or vulture. During flight the kite utters its curious shrill calls which sound like *chee, hee, hee, hee*. The Urdu name for the bird is *chil*. This is doubtless an attempt to imitate the sound made by the bird, just as are the Hindustani names *koel* and *popiya*. If you watch a kite while it is sailing high in the air, you will notice that it turns its head from side to side; it is scanning the earth below for something to eat. When it sees this, it descends rapidly and captures its quarry in its big talons. As the kites and crows eat the same kind of food, there is a good deal of rivalry between them and they often fight.

The kite is a much stronger bird than the crow, and therefore the crow never attacks the kite from in front, but often a pair of crows set themselves to tease a kite. They see a kite sitting on the ground and they fly up to it, one alighting behind and the other in front of the kite. The bird behind pecks at the kite's tail. The kite then turns round to attack the crow. As soon as this happens, the other crow pecks at its tail. I have often seen a couple of crows treating a kite like this until at last the kite has flown away. At the nesting season the crows never lose an opportunity of annoying the kite, and the consequence is that when a pair are nesting there is much squabbling between the kites and the crows of the locality.

February is the month in which the kites in my village breed. A few begin to make nests in December or January, but most of them begin early in February. The nest is usually placed high up in the fork of a tree. It is a large clumsy mass of sticks and twigs, but it often contains rags, leaves, paper and such like things. The kite sometimes breeds in a tree in the middle of a village. Two eggs are usually laid. These have a greyish white background blotched, streaked or speckled with brown or red. The young

birds seem rather timid about flying, and they sometimes sit on the nest for three or four days after they are able to fly, apparently because they are afraid to test their wings.

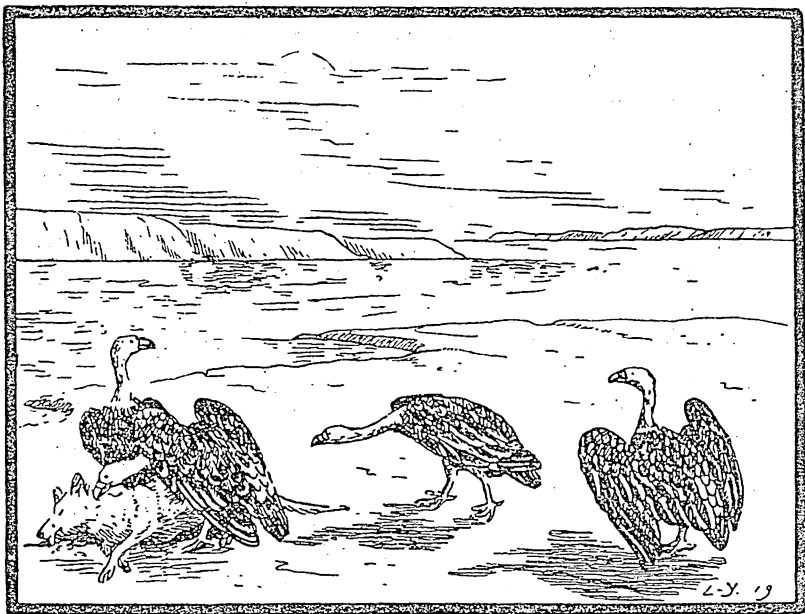
There is another kite, which comes sometimes to my village in the rains, called the brahminy kite. The Hindustani names are *brahmani chil* or *shankar chil*, *dhobia chil* or *rooh mubarak*. This is a very handsome bird. Its head and shoulders are white and its wings are rich chestnut brown. Its habits are much like those of the ordinary kite, but it often picks its food from off the surface of the water. If there is a big *jhil* near your village, there are certain to be some brahminy kites there. This bird is called the brahminy kite because it is considered to have some connection with Vishnu, being coloured like his *vahan* — the *garuda*, which has a white head and red wings. Indeed, in South India the brahminy kite is called *garuda*. The nesting habits of brahminy kites are similar to those of the common kite, but the brahminy kite usually builds its nest in a tree near a *jhil*.

XXIV

Vultures

VULTURES are numbered among the biggest birds in India. They are not beautiful like most birds, but are very ugly; the head and neck are more or less bare, being naked or covered with short down. Vultures, although unsightly birds, are very useful, and, indeed, but for them India would be a very unhealthy country. Most kinds of vultures feed only on the flesh of dead bodies and this is why they are so useful. When an animal dies, if there were no vultures or jackals or hyænas, the body would lie putrefying for many days. Thanks to the vultures every dead animal is soon

devoured. The way in which the vultures collect round the dead body of a man or animal is extraordinary. Vultures like kites have very powerful wings, and they are able to fly for hours without getting tired. Their habit is to soar



Vultures

high up in the air; sometimes so high that a man cannot see them. When vultures are hungry, they fly into the upper air and sail slowly in circles watching the earth beneath and also the neighbouring vultures. When an animal is about to die, the crows collect round ready to devour it; one of the vultures soaring about observes this and it at once flies down. The other vultures that are soaring see this and follow the first vulture, so that, almost before life has become extinct, the dying animal is surrounded by a dozen or more

vultures which proceed to tear it to pieces and devour the body. You must have often seen a crowd of vultures, crows and pariah dogs round some dead animal. It is a most unpleasant sight. These great birds eat so much that they often find it difficult to fly after their meal, and if a man goes up to them they hop away, finding it too difficult to fly. A meal such as this satisfies them for two or three days and they sit on branches of trees digesting their food. When they again become hungry, they take to their wings and fly in circles until some other dead body is discovered.

Three kinds of vultures visit my village whenever a buffalo or bullock dies. The biggest of the vultures is called the black vulture or *raj gidh*. It is the most powerful of all the vultures and is nearly a yard long. You can easily tell this vulture from the others because it has large red wattles of skin hanging down on each side of the neck like the ears of a dog. This bird has all the feathers black except a white patch on the chest and one on each thigh. The second vulture that comes to my village is called the *gidh* or white-backed vulture. It is easy to distinguish it from the *raj gidh* because it has no red wattles, the naked skin of the head and neck being a blackish gray. As the English name implies, its back is white. When the bird is sitting, this is covered by its wings, but when it flies you can easily see the white back. The third vulture is smaller than the other two and has quite a different shape. It sometimes eats dead animals, but more usually it lives on human excrement. It is called by the English the white scavenger vulture, scavenger being the English name for sweeper. In Hindustani it is called the *safed gidh*. Its bare head, neck and bill are yellow, the plumage is dirty white with some black on the wing. Young birds are black; when they are about a year old, they lose their black feathers and get white

ones instead. Vultures, unlike most birds in India, nest in the cold weather. The nest is a very large one, made of sticks and twigs. It is usually built fairly high up in a large tree. The black vulture lays one egg which is white. The white-backed vulture also lays only one egg. This is usually white, but sometimes has some reddish brown marks on it. The scavenger vulture generally lays two eggs which are pretty, being richly spotted with red.

XXV

The Sun-bird or Honey-sucker

IN the last chapter we spoke about some of the largest and ugliest birds in India. Let us now talk about one of the smallest and most beautiful. You probably have noticed the Sun-bird or Honey-sucker or *Shakar Khora* as Indians call it. The sun-bird is smaller than the sparrow (*gaurya*). It has a long curved bill which is as sharp as a needle at the point. The tongue is long and is in shape like a very thin tube and by means of it the honey-sucker sucks up the honey which is to be found in flowers. You probably know that most flowers have inside them little cups which contain honey. Bees visit flowers and suck up the honey and store it away in their hives in order to feed their young. Men often take these because they are fond of honey. The honey-sucker swallows the honey that it sucks up. Sometimes the flower from which it wants to take honey is so placed that the bird cannot perch, so that it has to hover in the air on rapidly moving wings while it sucks the honey from the flower. In cases of very big flowers the sun-bird sometimes makes a little hole with its bill in the side of the flower and extracts the honey through this. The cock sun-

bird is clothed from head to foot in dark purple. When the sun is not shining, the bird looks almost black, but when the sun comes out and shines on its plumage the bird some-



Cock and Hen Sun-birds

times looks a beautiful green and at others a rich blue. The hen has the upper plumage earthy brown and the lower plumage very pale yellow. After the breeding season the cock loses some of his purple colour and becomes like the hen except that he always has a band of purple from his

chin to his belly. From about the beginning of January till well on into August the cock sun-bird sings very sweetly. The nest of the sun-bird is a wonderful structure nearly as cleverly made as the nest of the *baya*. Like the nest of the *baya* it hangs from a branch.

It is usually built not very high above the ground, sometimes less than a yard. The hen sun-birds collect cobwebs in their bills and smear these on the branch from which the nest will hang. Then they proceed to collect dry grass and leaves which they stick to the cobwebs. Then they collect more cobweb and more grass until they have hung on to the branch a mass of materials as big as a man's fist. The entrance to the nest is at one side and over it is a little porch. The egg chamber is lined with soft material such as the silky seed down of the *semal* tree. In this two or three tiny eggs are laid. These are the colour of milk with some gray specks on them. The sun-bird, besides using twigs and leaves, presses into service for nest construction any other material it can find. Often paper, cloth, straw, string, blotting-paper, and sometimes postage stamps are used.

The sun-bird is one of the earliest birds to begin nesting. Its eggs have been found early in February, but March and April are the months in which most nests are likely to be seen. The nest is large for the size of the bird and is liable to be mistaken for a collection of dry grass that has become caught in a tree or bush. I believe that the cock does not take any part in building of the nest, hatching the eggs or feeding the young. This is rather unusual. In most birds both the cock and the hen help to rear up the family. As the nest is often built low down the eggs are frequently destroyed by snakes and squirrels. Crows and tree-pies, who are great robbers of nests, also prey upon the eggs and

young of the beautiful sun-bird. Nevertheless, the sun-bird flourishes and is to be found in almost every village.

XXVI

Doves

THERE are several kinds of doves to be seen in every village. There are three common Hindustani names for the dove, namely, *fakhta*, *gugu* and *perki*. The four commonest doves in the United Provinces are the spotted dove or *chitroka fakhta*, the little brown dove or *chhota fakhta*, the ring dove or *dhora fakhta* and the red turtle dove or *siroti fakhta*. It is quite easy to recognise all these doves both by their appearance and their note and I hope that every one who reads this will make a point of finding out how many of the above doves occur in his village. You are all familiar with the general appearance of the dove. It is a bird about the size of a *myna* with soft gray colouring: The spotted dove is reddish-gray in colour. On the sides of the neck is a pattern in black and white like a tiny chess board. The wings are spotted. This gives the spotted dove its name. The little brown dove has also a miniature chess board on the side of its neck, but its wings are not spotted. They are plain gray. The two species can be easily distinguished by their calls; the call of the spotted dove is a plaintive *cuckoo-coo-coo*. That of the little brown dove consists of at least five notes. It is rather musical and may be described as *cuck-cuck-coo-coo-coo*. The other two doves have not got the little chess board on the side of the neck. The Indian ring dove, as the name implies, has a ring round the hind neck. This ring or collar is black with a narrow edging of white. The ring dove is a pretty bird, its plumage

has a bluish tinge and the wings are not spotted. Its note is also quite distinct. It is *ku-ku-ku*. The fourth dove, the red turtle dove, differs from all the others in that the cock



Spotted Doves and Nest

and the hen have different plumage. In the three already described there is no difference in appearance between the cock and the hen. The plumage of the cock red turtle dove has a reddish tinge and the wings are very markedly red. Like the ring dove it has a black collar round the back of

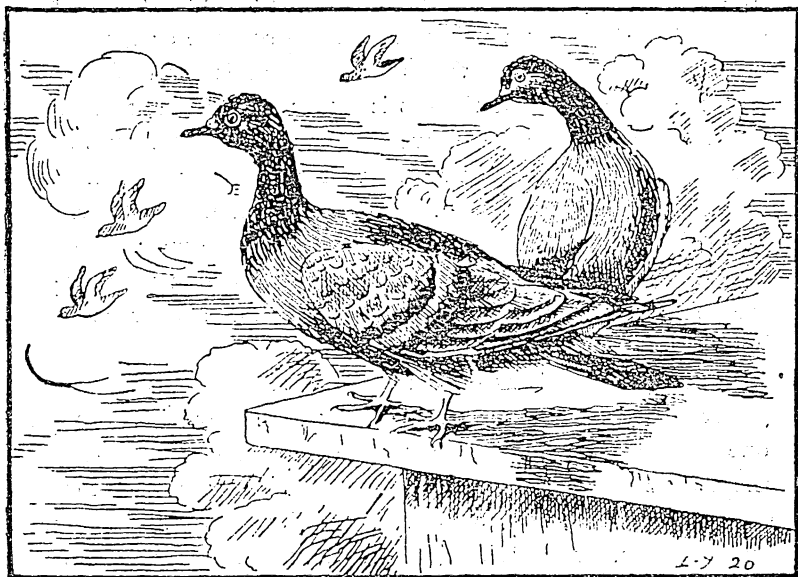
the neck. The hen is a brownish bird and lacks the red wings. She has the black collar and may therefore be mistaken for a ring dove, but she is a good deal smaller, the ring dove being 12½ inches long, while the red turtle dove is 9 inches. The note of the red turtle dove is very different to that of any other dove. It has a deep grunting sound *coo-coo-coo*. If you see a dove that has a tiny chess board on the side of its neck it must be the spotted or the little brown bird and if the wings are spotted it is the former. If it has a black collar then it is either the ring or red turtle dove. The habits of all doves are much alike. Doves are very fond of hearing their own voices and they call all the day long, all the year round. They are inclined to be quarrelsome and they bring up many broods in the year. Some pairs have at least six families in the year. You may often see them courting. The cock bird puffs out his throat and bobs his head and chases the hen.

The nest is a very curious one. Probably less building material is used by the dove than by any other bird. Some one said by way of a joke, "Take two long twigs and lay them on a branch. Then take two short twigs and put these across the long ones and you have a dove's nest." This is exaggeration, but in many nests there are probably not more than 20 twigs used. The nest is not a cup but a mere platform or *machan*, and is so slenderly built that you can often see eggs from below. The eggs are white and two are laid. Doves usually build their nests in small trees. They are very fond of babul trees. But some kinds of doves have the habit of making their nests in buildings. If there is any convenient ledge in a wall or verandah, as likely as not, a dove will build its nest there. Doves feed entirely on grain.

XXVII

The Pigeon

THE pigeon or *kabutar* is nothing but a large dove, as you can see for yourself by looking at him. His habits are



Blue-rock Pigeons

also very similar to those of doves, as we shall see. The English name for the *kabutar* is the Indian blue-rock pigeon. The general colour of the plumage is grayish blue. If you look at the bird carefully, you will see that the wings are set off by two black bars and that when the sun is shining on the bird the neck glistens with different colours, being green in some lights and red in others. The legs are a deep red and the eye orange brown. Both sexes are alike. The

tame pigeons for which people build little houses and erect *chhattās* are all descendants of wild pigeon and these tame birds often associate and pair with the wild birds. Pigeons feed almost entirely on grain, but they do not seem to do much damage to the fields; they prefer to pick it up in streets of towns where there is always a good deal of grain present. The pigeons of a locality collect together and roost in one place. Usually they do not roost in trees but on buildings or on rocks. If you have been to Benares you may have seen thousands of pigeons roosting on the roof of the Queen's College. Just before sunset the pigeons begin to fly in from places as far distant as two or three miles. The voice of the pigeon is a *coo* which is much like that of the dove. Blue-rock pigeons do not nest in trees. They breed either in holes in rocks or kachcha wells or inside buildings. Any deserted building which has an opening to the outside and contains a ledge inside on which the pigeon can build its nest is selected as a nesting site. The nest is a collection of twigs and straws thrown carelessly on to the ledge or other place where the nest is built. Two white eggs are laid. You will probably remember that the doves also lay two white eggs. The breeding season for the pigeons begins in December and ends in June; but you may find nests containing eggs or young at other times of the year. Most nests are to be found in March and April. In those months, if you throw a stone into a disused kachcha well, it is quite likely that a pair of pigeons will fly up out of the well. These have a nest inside the well and become alarmed when a stone is thrown into it.

Many young birds are rather pretty objects, but young pigeons are an exception to the rule. They are anything but beautiful. They emerge from the egg naked and unable to run, but they do not grow a soft down like most young

birds before their proper feathers come. They remain in the nest for a very long time. The parents feed them with a kind of milk which comes from the crop. The crop is that part of a grain-feeding bird in which grain first passes after it has been swallowed. If you throw a handful of gram on to the ground near where pigeons are, you will see the pigeons devour this grain with great rapidity. One bird will pick up perhaps 100 grains in less than a minute. These grains pass into the crop where they can be digested at leisure. It is from this crop that the milky stuff comes on which young pigeons are fed.

XXVIII

The Green Pigeon

THE green pigeon or *harial* is related to the blue rock-pigeon and the dove and is a very beautiful bird. It is called the green pigeon because as it flies overhead it looks green, but if you are able to get near enough to one of these birds to see it plainly—not an easy thing to do unless the bird is in a cage—you will see that there are many colours in the plumage. There is some grey in the head, a patch of lilac, some yellow and black in the wing, a patch of dull red under the tail and some black on the tail. The eyes are blue with a ring of pink round them. The tip of the bill is pale blue. The rest of the plumage is various shades of green. The colours are all soft and merge into one another as beautifully as do the colours of the sky when the sun is setting in the monsoon season. Green pigeons go about in small flocks of 10 or 20. A peculiarity about them is that they very rarely come to the ground. It is said that a green pigeon will not pollute its feet by allowing them to touch the ground, so that when it wants to drink, it flies to the

water with a twig in its claws. This is not so, but the fact that such a story exists shows how rarely the *harial* descends to the ground. Green pigeons live almost entirely on fruit.



Green Pigeons

They are very fond of figs. Whenever a pipal or a banyan tree bears fruit, it is visited by a large number of birds and among these are invariably some green pigeons. A writer compares the fruiting of a fig tree in India to the feast that a Raja gives when an heir is born to the throne. As

mendicant Brahmans gather from distant provinces to such a feast, so do green pigeons from miles around flock to a fruiting fig tree. Owing to their green colour it is very difficult to see green pigeons in a tree. You may however know when they are in a tree by the peculiar whistling note they utter. The note is not a *coo* like that of the blue rock-pigeon, but a very curious whistle, which I fear I am not able to describe. Some people keep green pigeons in cages because of their notes. If any of your friends has a green pigeon in a cage, you should look at it and notice all the beautiful colours in its plumage. Even if you have not a friend who has a green pigeon in a cage, if you take a little trouble, you will soon learn the note. The way to learn a bird's call is, of course, to listen to the bird when it is calling. If a bird is calling or singing in a tree and you cannot see it, you can make the bird fly away by throwing a stone into the tree, then you will probably see the bird as it flies away and may be able to recognise it. If two or three different kinds of birds fly out from the tree, any of them may have uttered the call you heard. In that case you must repeat the process when next you hear the call. You cannot learn things about birds without taking a little trouble. But if you take trouble, you will soon learn the calls and cries of all birds in your village and will be able to recognise the calls and say "That is a *nilkant* calling," even when you cannot see the bird, just as you are able to recognise the howl of the jackal, even though you cannot see him. Green pigeons nest in trees, very often in shisham trees. The nest is like that of a dove, being a loosely-constructed platform of small twigs. On this two white eggs are laid. The nesting season lasts from March to June. The nests are usually placed high up in the tree, but often in rather a conspicuous situation so that you can see the bird sitting.

XXIX

The Pond Heron or Paddy-bird

IN every village pond and in every tank there is always to be seen a paddy-bird or *bagla* sitting with his feet in the water and his head buried in his shoulders. You must all know what a paddy-bird looks like. As he sits at the water's edge looking rather miserable, he appears to be the colour of earth. When he flies he suddenly becomes white. His wing feathers are white, but when he is not flying these are folded up and covered by his mud-coloured plumage. If you look at the bird closely, you will see that most of his feathers have a pale yellowish line down the middle and that his chin, throat and upper breast are white streaked with brown, that his eyes are bright yellow and his bill is blue near the face, yellowish in the middle and black at the tip, and his legs and feet are dull green. In the breeding season the feathers of the back become reddish and look as if they had been stained by permanganate of potash. He is about the size of an ordinary fowl and will let a man go quite near him before he flies away. This is why he is sometimes called the blind heron or *andha bagla*. Really he is not blind, but has very good eye-sight. If you watch a paddy-bird for some time, you will see it becomes suddenly on the alert and its head bends slowly forward. Then the head darts forward, so that the neck is stretched to its full length, to seize a frog which has just come into view, which is swallowed at one gulp. Paddy-birds live exclusively on frogs, crabs, small fish and water insects. The paddy-bird is so much the colour of water and stands so still that frogs and other animals in the water do not think it is a bird, but mistake it for a piece of wood and so come close up to it.

The paddy-bird has no song, but if you disturb it, it flies away uttering a curious sound like the croak of a frog.



The Paddy-Bird or Pond Heron

Although two paddy-birds are never seen close together during the day-time, they roost in company. At sunset all the paddy-birds of the locality, perhaps fifty or sixty, fly to some tree, usually one growing out of water, and spend the night on that tree. You should try to find out where the

paddy-birds in your village spend the night. You will be amused to see them quarrelling about good branches on which to sleep.

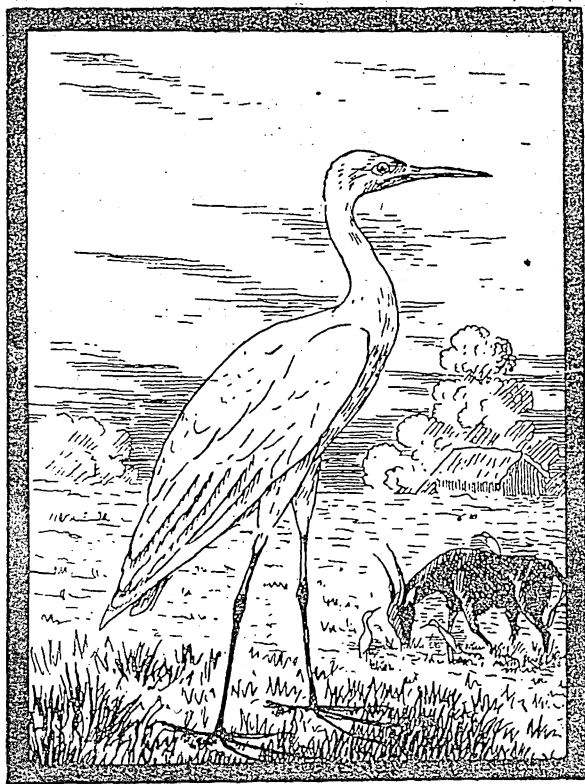
The nesting season is from April to May, and, as a rule, several pairs of paddy-birds nest in one tree, usually not a very big one, and, as often as not, in the middle of a village. Generally the tree selected grows out of water or on the edge of a bank. The nest is just a collection of sticks put together very carelessly. On this four rather pretty pale green eggs are laid. Often weaver birds or *bayas*, which I have already described, have their nests on the same tree as the paddy-birds build on. There may be twenty or thirty trees in a village, but you will perhaps see only one used as a nesting site and in it there will be seven or eight paddy-birds' nests and a dozen or more *bayas*' nests. Nesting birds seem to like company. Young paddy-birds when they leave the nest are very like their parents, differing from them only in size.

XXX

Egrets

THERE is a relation of the paddy-bird or *bagla* which sometimes comes to my village and probably to yours. The English call it cattle egret. It has many Hindustani names. One of these is *gai bagla*, another *surkhia bagla*, another *badami bagla*, and another *lal bagla* and yet another *doria bagla*. It is called the cattle egret or *gai bagla*, because it is very fond of walking along beside cattle when they are grazing. You must be familiar with the bird. Its plumage is pure white at all seasons of the year except the rains. It is a little larger than the paddy-bird. Its bill is yellow and its legs black. You must wonder why if it is white it

is called *surkhia*, *badami* or *lal*. The reason is that before the breeding season it moults or changes its feathers (as all birds do at certain seasons of the year) and the new feathers



The Cattle-Egret

that come on the head, neck and back are the colour of brick-dust or what is called in Hindustani *badami*. During the breeding season, from the back grow some very long curious feathers. If you look at an ordinary feather of any bird, you will see that it consists of a hard shaft and from this

grow on either side a great number of soft branches. These branches are very close together so that a feather appears to be solid, but if you examine it carefully, you will see that each of these branches is separate. In the case of the curious feathers that grow from the back of the cattle-egret the branches of the feathers are not close together, but some way apart, so they are very graceful. If you have ever seen a raja in full dress, you will have noticed that he wears in his turban, attached to it by some jewel, an aigrette. This aigrette has been taken from one of the different kinds of egrets in the breeding season.

In addition to the cattle-egret there are three other white egrets which are known as the large egret or *tar bagla* or *bara bagla*, the smaller egret or *karchia bagla* and the little egret which is also called the *karchia bagla* or *kilchia*. These other kinds of egret only come to my village when the fields are flooded in the rainy season. The cattle-egret, on the other hand, may be seen at most seasons of the year. It feeds largely on grasshoppers and other insects which live in the grass. As cattle graze, they move slowly from place to place. The movement of these big animals disturbs the insects in the grass and these either run, or jump, or fly away and the cattle-egret seizes them while they are moving away. Thus the cow or buffalo acts as a beater for it. By beater I mean one who drives game birds and animals from their hiding places. The cattle take no notice of the cattle-egrets as these march along beside them. Sometimes the cattle-egret, like the crow and the king-crow or *bhuchanga*, perches on the back of the cow. The cow does not mind in the least. Cattle-egrets, like paddy-birds and other egrets, breed in colonies. The nest of the cattle-egret is just like that of the paddy-bird and the eggs are of the same pale green colour. As a rule, three, four or five eggs are laid in

each nest. In Northern India the breeding season is from June to August. In Madras cattle-egrets nest in November and December; sometimes they build their nests in the same tree as the paddy-bird does. It may happen that the larger egrets build their nests on the same tree. Thus on one tree you may see the nests of the smaller, the little and the cattle-egret and the pond heron.

XXXI

The Nuthatch

THE nuthatch is found in every grove near my village. Unfortunately I do not know what the Indian name for this bird is. The English call it the nuthatch because in England the bird has the habit of breaking up nuts with its powerful little bill. In the plains of India there are not many nuts for these birds to break and I think that a good Hindustani name for the bird would be the tree-runner because of the clever way in which the bird runs up and down the trunks and branches of trees. Perhaps there is an Indian name for the bird. If so, I hope you will write to me and tell me what it is. A nuthatch is scarcely so large as a sparrow and has a much shorter tail. The head, neck, back, wings, and tail are dark grayish blue. There is a black band on each side of the head running from the mouth to the shoulder. The cheeks and chin are white. The under parts are brownish red, but you will see these only when the bird flies. As it runs rapidly up and down a tree trunk, you will be able to see the blue gray upper plumage, the white cheeks and the black band. You cannot mistake the bird. It runs about the branches and trunks of trees in a most marvellous way. It moves along the underside of a branch;

as easily as it does on top of the branch. It has large powerful claws that enable it to grip tightly the rough bark on which it lives. We have seen how wonderfully the wood-



Nuthatches

pecker or *katpurva* is able to move about the trunk of a tree. The nuthatch is much more clever than the woodpecker because it can run head foremost down the trunk without falling, which the woodpecker cannot do. Nuthatches, like the woodpecker, do not often come on to the

ground. Like the wood-peckers they feed on the insects that live on trees and hide in cracks in the bark. Nuthatches go about in couples or in small flocks, which I think consist of father, mother and children. From January to May the nuthatch is rather a noisy bird. It keeps uttering a loud *tee-tee-tee-tee-tee*. You cannot mistake the sound if you have once learned to know it. I hope that every one who reads this will go to the nearest grove and look at all the trees until he sees a nuthatch.

Nuthatches usually lay their eggs in March. They nest in holes in trees. Most old trees have some cavities in them. The pair of nuthatches selects a suitable hole, usually some way up the trunk of the tree; to this they carry some leaves on which to lay the eggs, which are white with reddish spots.

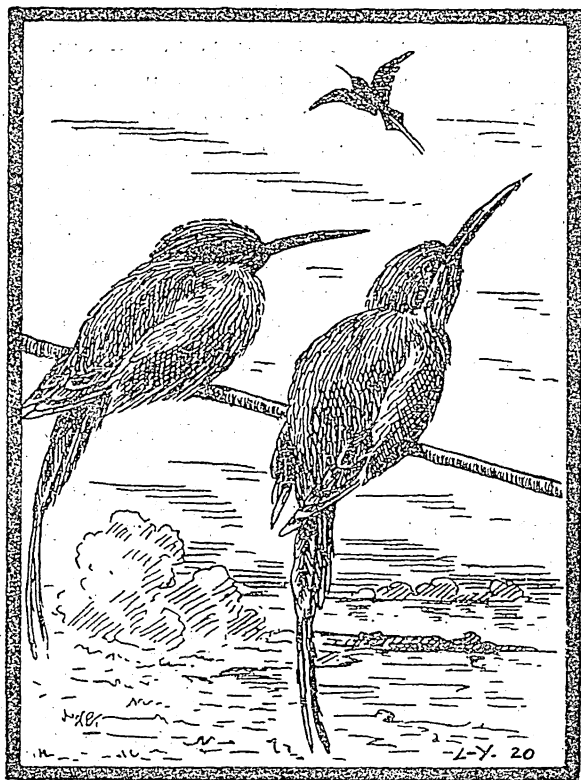
In order to protect their eggs from lizards, squirrels and other creatures that eat eggs, the nuthatches block up the whole of the entrance to the cavity except a tiny round hole just large enough for them to squeeze through, but too small to admit anything bigger than a nuthatch. The birds block up the entrance to the nest by mud which they mix with a sticky fluid extracted from some plant, and this in a short time becomes as hard as cement. If you are fortunate, you may see, in February or March, a pair of nuthatches closing up part of the entrance of their nest; and you may be able to find out from what plant they take the sticky stuff to make the mud hold together. I do not know from what plant they take it. Later on, at the end of March and beginning of April, you may see the birds carrying food to the young ones inside the hole.

XXXII

Bee-eaters

ONE of the most beautiful birds in my village is the Indian Bee-eater, which the Indians call the *patringa*, or *patana*, or *harial*. As you know, *harial* is a name for the green pigeon, but as the bee-eater is also a green bird it is called *harial*. This bird does not usually come into the *abadi*, but it is to be seen on the outer trees of most groves, and, if there be a telegraph wire or other exposed place for them to sit on near your village, you are likely to see numbers of bee-eaters there. The body of the bee-eater is about the same size as that of the sparrow, or *gauriya*, but the tail is much longer than the sparrow's. The prevailing colour of the bee-eater is bright green like that of grass after much rain, but, as in the case of the green pigeon, the plumage consists of many shades which blend together in the most beautiful manner. The green of the upper parts is sometimes tinged with gold. The under parts of the wings are almost the colour of gold, while the upper parts are bright green so that when the bird makes a flight to catch an insect it seems to change in colour alternately from green to gold as the sun's rays fall upon the upper or the lower surface of the wings. The chin and cheeks of the bee-eater are bright blue. There is a black necklace. The pointed bill is black and a streak of black runs from the bill through the eye. The eye is bright red. There is one feature which makes it very easy to recognize a bee-eater and that is the two middle tail feathers are narrow. They are about two inches longer than the other tail feathers, and, as they are black, they look as though they were two wires that had been stuck in to the bird's tail. As bee-eaters are not shy

birds and will allow a man to approach quite close, you can easily see all these things for yourself. Bee-eaters are likely to be found in your village throughout the year. They feed



Green Bee-eaters

entirely on insects which they catch in the air. When a bee-eater sees a flying insect, it goes after it and catches it and you can sometimes hear the snap of its beak as it closes on the insect. Bee-eaters eat bees and this is why the English call them bee-eaters. The bee-eater has a very soft

note which I cannot find words to describe. But you will be able to hear it for yourself as the bird frequently utters it. Bee-eaters clean their feathers by means of sand. Just as a Hindu takes his daily bath so do most birds. The majority bathe in water, but a few, as for example, the bee-eater and hoopoe (*hudhud*), bathe by crouching in the dust, ruffling their feathers, and moving about so that the dust gets in between them. Even as fleas are fond of sucking the blood of men and dogs, so are there numbers of tiny insects which get into the plumage of birds and irritate them by sucking their blood. A bath is taken by birds to rid themselves of these pests.

The nest of the bee-eater is a hole in a cliff or sandbank or a *band* between two fields which the birds themselves hollow out, just as bank mynas do. I have described to you the nest of the bank myna. That of the bee-eater is of the same kind, but the hole leading to it is much smaller. The birds themselves make the hole in the soft sand with beak and claws, and if you watch carefully in March and April, you are likely to see bee-eaters digging out their nests. The depth of the nest varies from three to six feet. Five or six almost white eggs are laid. Nearly all birds that lay their eggs in dark holes lay white eggs. Some people think that if the eggs were not white they would not be visible in the dark and the bird might omit to sit on some, so that they would become addled. Young bee-eaters are like the parents except they have not the two long wire-like feathers in the tail.

There is another bee-eater which you may see in your village. This is called the blue-tailed bee-eater by the English and *bara patringa* by the Indians. As the English name shows, there is much blue in the bird's tail and as the Indian name shows, it is larger than the other bee-eater.

Its chin is yellow and throat chestnut, whereas, the throat of the little bee-eater is bluish green. This bee-eater has exactly the same habits as the little bee-eater.

XXXIII

Owls.—I.

OWLS differ in many ways from the birds we have been talking about. A bird's structure and appearance are closely connected with its habits. Birds that live much in the water have webs or lobes on their toes to enable them to swim easily. Birds that run a great deal have strong legs. Birds that spend much time in the air, like vultures, have very large wings. Most of the birds I have described spend the day in seeking their food and sleep at night. Owls do the reverse; they lie up in holes in trees or buildings during the day and come out at night to feed. In consequence they have very large eyes to enable them to see well at night time. Owls are almost the only birds of which the eyes face forward, like those of a man or a monkey. Nearly all birds have the eyes at the side on the head, like those of a horse. In some respects it is good to have eyes at the side of the head instead of facing forward. If your eyes were where your ears are, you could see equally well in front and behind, but you could not see quite so well in front as you can now. Animals that are preyed upon by larger animals find it advantageous to have the eyes at the side of the head because they can see an animal coming up behind without looking round. The owl is a bird of prey. It feeds on rats, insects, lizards and small birds, but nothing feeds upon it. It has, therefore, nothing to fear from behind but it is very important that it should see well in front. For this reason

its eyes face forward. But, as you may see for yourself, the owl is able to turn its head round a long way without any effort, so that, although its eyes are in front, the bird has a wide range of vision without turning the body. Other peculiarities of the owl which you will not be able to see for yourself unless you hold a bird in your hand, are the very soft silky nature of its feathers, its large ears, and the fact that the legs have feathers on them reaching to the toe. When a bird flies over you, you can hear the swish of its wings as they flap in the air. In the case of ducks, partridges and other birds which move the wings very rapidly the noise they make when flying is considerable. Owls fly without making any noise; one may pass by within a foot of your ear without your hearing a sound. This noiseless flight enables the owl, no matter how quiet and still the night be, to approach its victim in the air. The ears of most birds are small and so covered with feathers that it is difficult to find them. It is not so with the owl. The ear hole is so large that you can put your thumb into it. Owls have very good hearing and are able to hear objects moving even when they cannot see them. This is very useful to them when hunting. As I have already said, owls eat insects, rats and other small animals; some live on fish. Owls usually swallow their victims whole—feathers, bones and everything. The parts of their food they cannot digest, that is to say hairs, bones, and feathers, are formed into pellets in the stomach and disgorged. When an owl seizes a mouse or a rat, the latter naturally bites at its legs and were these not protected by feathers, they would often be injured. This is the reason why owls and eagles have feathers all the way down the leg.

XXXIV

Owls.—II.

If there be a big mango grove near your village, it will doubtless be tenanted by several kinds of owls. Some of these may be as big as vultures, and others not larger than



Spotted Owlets

sparrows. As owls generally keep hidden during the day time and come out only at night you are not likely to see many of those that live near your village. Occasionally you may see the crows mobbing a large owl, that is to say chasing it from tree to tree. Crows sleep during the night and so do not know of the existence of owls, that only come out at night, and when one of these appears in the day time,

the crows attack it as they attack every strange bird or beast they see. There is, however, one little owl that comes out in daylight.

The English call this the spotted owlet and the Indians call it *Khukhusata* or *Khusattia*. This little bird is not much larger than a sparrow. Its upper plumage is brown, much spotted and barred with white. Its lower plumage is white with dark brown spots and cross bars. This bird does not wait until it becomes dark to leave the hole in which it spends the day. It invariably comes abroad about sunset and may often be seen when the sun is bright. You cannot mistake this owl. It has big yellow eyes and, when it sees you are looking at it, it crouches and glares at you very fiercely and then flies away making a great noise. This owlet is very noisy indeed. It does not call continuously, but every now and then. During moonlight nights or about sunset you will hear what one writer calls "a torrent of squeak and chatter and gibberish." The noise made by this little owl sounds to me like *kucha*, *kwachee*, *kwachee*, *khvachee* rapidly uttered in a shrieking, chattering tone. It is difficult to describe the call in words, but, when you once hear the call you cannot mistake it. The little owl is not a shy bird; it will allow you to come quite close to it. During the day it lives in a hole in a tree or in building. In February or March it lays three, four or five white eggs in the hole in which it lives, and, early in April, you will see the young ones coming out to feed at dusk. If you can discover the hole in which a pair of these little owls spend the day, and tap the tree with a stick, probably one of the birds will show its face at the hole. Then if you stare at him, he will fly out and sit on a branch and keep bobbing up and down in the most ridiculous way. This is the only owl that you are likely to see, because it is the only one that usually comes

out when it is light enough for you to see it. But there are two other owls which you will often hear at night, especially on moonlight nights. These, like the spotted owlet, already described, are both small owls, not much bigger than sparrows. One of these is called the Jungle Owlet by the English and *Kala Kasut* or *Jungle Chogad* by Indians. This, should you happen to see it, is very like the spotted owlet to look at. It often calls at night and early in the morning. The call is very peculiar. It begins softly and slowly and gets quicker and louder. It is best pronounced by the words, *Turtuck, turtuck, turtuck, turtuck, turtuck, turtuck, tuckatu, chatucka tuckatuck.*

There is yet another owl which you will sometimes hear, but not often see. It is called by the English the Scops Owl. I do not know whether it has an Indian name. You are not likely to see it unless you take it out of its hole. It is a small bird like the spotted owlet, but differs from it in having what are often called horns—tufts of feathers sticking up from the top of the head like small horns. This bird calls *oomp* and then waits for thirty seconds or a minute and again calls *oomp*. It will continue to do this for half the night.

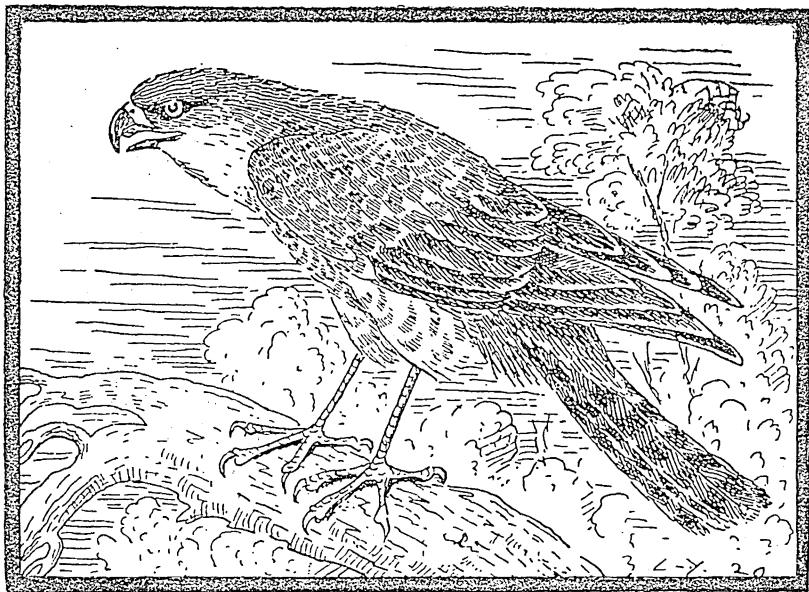
Because the three owls which you are likely to hear are small, you must not think that all owls are small; as I have already said, some are as big as vultures. One of the bigger owls utters at night, a low grunting sound *Ur ur ur ur ur ur ur ur ur*. You may perhaps have heard this, but you are not likely to have seen the bird.

XXXV

Birds of Prey.—I.

A BIRD of prey or *Shikari Chirya* is one that hunts other birds and animals and eats them. Thus owls are birds of prey. These, as we have seen, hunt at night. We must now consider those birds of prey which hunt by day. There are many of these in your village and in mine. Some remain all the year round in India, and others come only for the winter. I cannot describe them all. It would take too much space and confuse you, because birds of prey resemble one another very closely in colouring. I will, therefore, talk to you about six or seven of the commoner ones. Now, in the case of one bird that I have written about, I have not met any one who knows its Hindustani name. This is not the case with the birds of prey. There are plenty of names for them. In the case of those that man has trained to hunt there is a different name for the male and the female. The reason of this is that among birds of prey the female is invariably larger and stronger than the male and is therefore more highly prized by the falconer. You must know what a falconer is, at any rate if you live in Oudh where many zamindars and taluqdars keep hawks and falcons which they train to hunt for them. Falconry is a very old amusement both in England and in India. The great Emperor Akbar was fond of hawking. Abul Fazal tells us that in the middle of spring all the Emperor's falcons were sent into the country to moult, that is to say at the time when they were changing their feathers, which I have already spoken to you about. After the birds had moulted, they were brought to the royal presence to be reviewed. Akbar laid down rules as to the quantity of food each kind of falcon belonging to him was

to get. He also fixed the prices of all kinds of falcons and hawks, fixing a higher price for the male than for the female. I have no time to tell you how people catch wild birds of prey and teach them to hunt, but the process is quite easy and in a few days after the bird is caught it learns to hunt.



Shikra

If there is any zamindar living near your village who has hawks, you should take an opportunity of following him one day when he is out hunting with them and ask his servants who look after the hawks, how they train them.

The commonest bird of prey in your village and mine is what the English call the *Shikra*. The Indians call the female *Shikra* and the male the *Chipka* or *Chipak*. The shikra is a bird smaller than a crow. Both sexes are coloured alike. The upper plumage is grey above in older birds and

brown in young birds. The tail is of the same colour, with some dark cross bars. In the young birds the lower parts are white, with large oval brown spots. The male has fewer spots than the female. In the adult bird instead of being spotted the breast is barred with narrow dull red bars. The legs are yellow and the eyes pale yellow in young birds and deep yellow in older ones. The shikra feeds on small birds and lizards, also on rats and grasshoppers. It is more commonly trained than any hawk in India and anyone can train one for himself. It is usually trained to seize quails (*Bater*) and partridges (*Titar*). In a state of nature it usually hunts on the edges of groves of trees and pounces on any bird or lizard it sees. It has a curious harsh whistling call. It nests from April to June, making a large stick nest high up in a tree. The eggs are usually four, being white in colour much blotched with reddish brown. The shikra is found all the year round in India. The Emperor Akbar fixed the price of a shikra from annas eight to one and a half *asharfis* or gold mohars and that of a *Chipka* from four annas to one gold mohar. The large range of prices depended, of course, on the valour of the bird, as some shikras will chase a pea-fowl—a bird ten times their size. There is another bird about the size of the shikra which Europeans call the sparrow-hawk because it feeds largely on sparrows. Indians call the female *Basha* and the male *Bashin*. This bird is very like the *Shikra*, but has longer legs. Another bird found all the year round in my village is the Red-headed Merlin. Indians call the female *Turumti* and the male *Chetwa*. The bird is rather larger than a sparrow-hawk and is easily recognised on account of the top of the head, the sides of the neck and a strip on each side of the head being dull red. The rest of the upper plumage is grey, with some brown bars. The tail is grey,

with narrow black bars, a very broad black band close to the end and a white tip. The lower parts are white with black streaks down the breast and dark bars across the abdomen. The red-headed merlin feeds chiefly on small birds. It is usually trained by men to catch the roller or *nilkant* and the hoopoe or *hudhud*.

XXXVI

Birds of Prey. — II.

A LARGER bird than the shikra but smaller than the *Chil* or kite, which, by the way, is also a bird of prey, although it feeds largely on dead matter, is a bird called the white-eyed buzzard-eagle or *Tisa*. The eye is white and there is a patch of white on the back of the neck. The rest of the plumage is pale brown. The white eye and the white neck patch make the bird easy to recognise. It is rather a sluggish bird and spends much time sitting on a telegraph wire, a *band* between two fields, or any other exposed place. Not being a quick flier the *Tisa* cannot catch birds, so the small birds do not attack him as they do the large birds of prey. You must often have noticed a commotion among the birds in a mango grove — *mynas*, *satbhais*, *nilkants* and *totas* all joining together and making a great noise. If you watch, you will see a big bird of prey emerge sooner or later from a tree; it is at once pursued by all the other birds, screaming angrily, who thus try to drive it away from their neighbourhood. The *Tisa* feeds mainly on frogs and insects. In April it builds a nest of sticks and twigs high up a tree. Rather larger than the *Tisa* are the falcons: the birds which Indian falconers call *Shia Chasham*, because their eyes are black. In many birds of prey the eyes are yellow. The *Shia Chasham* are the boldest of the birds of prey and are

highly prized by falconers. Within the space at my disposal I cannot attempt to describe them. Their most marked feature is the pair of long pointed wings. When the wings are closed, they come to within an inch of the tip of the tail.

Two falcons visit my village. The peregrine falcon of which the female is called the *Bhairi* and the male *Bhairi Bacha* and the *Shahin* falcon of which the female is called the *Shahin Kohi* and the male *Kohila*. The peregrine is a winter visitor to India. It feeds chiefly on ducks and crows. The *Shahin* is found in India throughout the year, and lives largely on pigeons, parrots, partridges and quails. When next you get a chance of seeing a trained falcon, note the bright dark eyes, the powerful hooked notched bill and the strong claws. The bird strikes its quarry in the air with its claws and pulls the flesh to pieces with its powerful notched bill.

Other birds of prey about the size of falcons which visit my village in winter are the harriers. These have yellow eyes and when they rest, which is not often, they sit on the ground. When flying they fly only a little above the ground and drop suddenly on to their quarry, which consists of grasshoppers, lizards, rats and small birds. The harriers that most frequently come to my village are the pale harrier known to Indians as the *Dastmal* or *Pattai* and the marsh harrier or *Kutar*. The males are handsome birds; the *Dastmal* is grey above and white below, the *Kutar* grey and brown. The females of both are like the kite or *Chil* in colouring.

Finally, I must mention the eagles—the tawny eagle or *Wokhab* and the steppe eagle or *Jumiz*. The *Wokhab* stays with us all the year round. It is of the size and has the appearance of a kite, but its tail is rounded and not forked

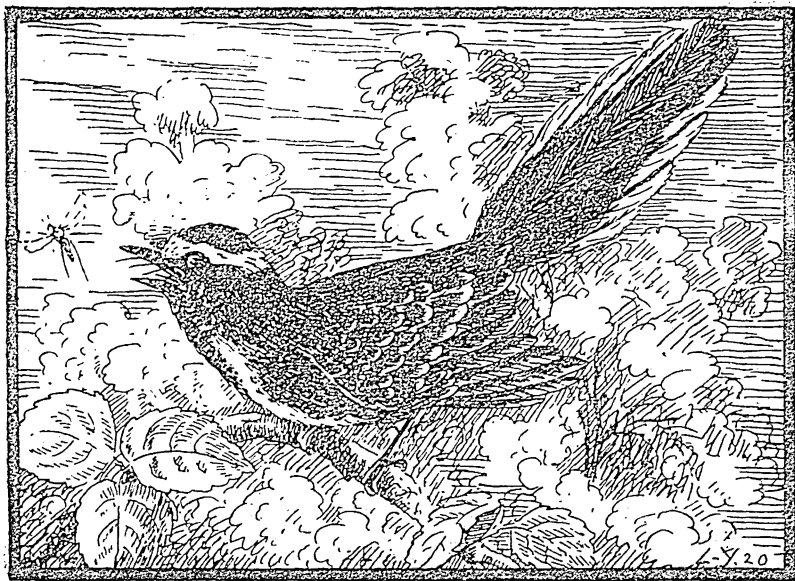
at the end like that of the kite. By this you may recognise the *Wokhab* and by its feathered legs and also by the fact that all the small birds in the vicinity attack it when they see it. In January it builds a nest of sticks high up in a tree and lays two eggs which are white, more or less spotted with pale brown. If you climb up a tree to take the eggs of this bird, it will probably attack you and perhaps pull off your *pagri*. The steppe eagle is a brown bird like the tawny eagle, but much larger.

XXXVII

Fly-catchers

SOME of the nicest birds in my village are the fly-catchers or *Makhimar Chirian*. These are all small birds, about the size of the sparrow (*Gauriya*) that feed entirely on flying insects which they catch on the wing. The fly-catcher sits on the end of a branch of a tree, or on a telegraph wire or other suitable place and, when it sees an insect flying by, it goes after it and catches it in its bill in the air and returns to its perch—just as the bee-eater (*harial*) does. Fly-catchers have the bill broad and flat. Thus they can seize insects more easily than they could were the bill narrow. If you go into any mango grove near your village, you will see in it a pair of pretty black-and-white birds. The English call these the white-browed fantail fly-catchers and the Indians the *Macharya*. The upper parts of the bird are black or brown, but the front of the head is white and there is a broad white band running from the white forehead over the top of the eye to the back of the neck. There is a little white in the wings, and the tip of the tail is white. The lower parts are white, except the throat which is spotted.

This bird is very lively, it is never still for a minute; when not catching insects it hops from branch to branch, and, every time it alights, it opens out its tail into a fan and dances quite as elegantly as a *nautch* girl. The habit of spreading its tail and the white eye-brow give it its English



The White-browed Fantail Fly-catcher

name. It has a loud and sweet whistling song of five or six notes which make a tune. It is impossible for me to describe the whistle, but when once you have heard it, you cannot mistake it. You may find the nest either in April or during the monsoon. It is usually placed in a mango or a guava tree on one of the lower branches, often less than a man's height from the ground. It is a tiny little cup made of dried grass, but is so thickly smeared with cobwebs

that little of the grass is visible. Three eggs are laid. These are the colour of milk, with a ring of brown specks round the thick end of the egg.

Another fly-catcher which comes to the mango groves near my village in the winter is the grey-headed fly-catcher for which, I believe, the Indian name is *Zard Phutki*. As the English name denotes, the head is grey, and as the Hindustani name shows, the bird is mainly coloured yellow. The word *phutki* indicates that it is of a small size. It is not so big as a sparrow. The head and breast are grey; from the breast downwards the lower parts are bright yellow. The upper plumage, except the head which is grey and the tail which is brown, is greenish yellow. This bird catches insects in the same way as the fantail fly-catcher does, but it does not dance and spread its tail. It has a loud call which it makes all day long and it sounds like "Think of me" or "*phenk wohi*." It keeps largely to the tops of the mango trees.

A very beautiful bird which sometimes comes to the mango groves near my village is the Paradise Fly-catcher. There are a number of Indian names for this—*Shah Bulbul*, *Hussaini Bulbul*, *Sultana Bulbul*, *Taklah*, *Dudhraj*. The hen is about the size of a bulbul and her crested head and general shape are very bulbul-like, and this is why the Indians call the bird a bulbul, but its habits are those of a fly-catcher. It catches flies in the same way as other fly-catchers do. The hen and the young cock have the head and the crest black, the throat grey and the rest of the plumage reddish brown. When the cock is a little more than a year old, he changes his feathers in the autumn in the way I have previously described and the two middle new tail feathers grow to a great length so that they become more than twice as long as the body. A year later, when

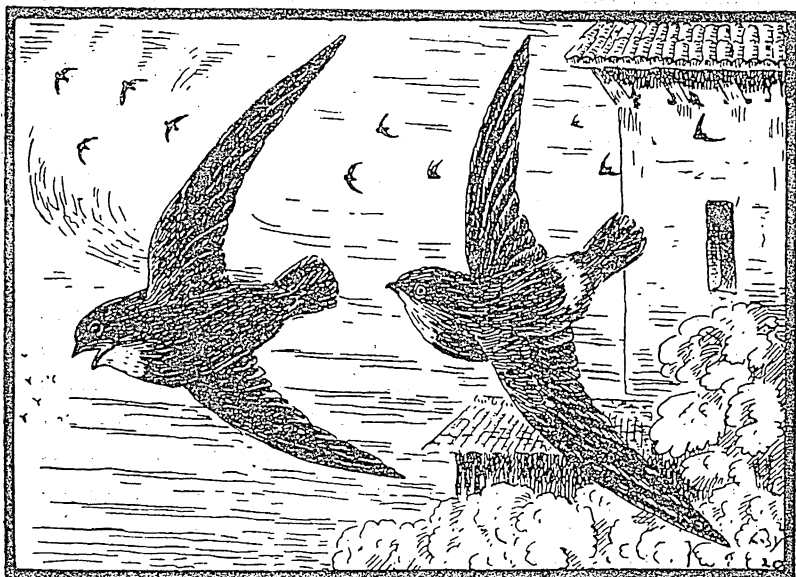
the cock changes his feathers, the red ones all become white. The long tail feathers flutter in the air in the same way as the tail of a kite (*guddy* or *patang*), and he then looks very handsome. The grey-headed fly-catcher does not nest in my village; it goes to the hills to breed, but sometimes the paradise fly-catcher builds and its nest is a neat cup, not very high up in a mango tree. The eggs are pink with red speckles. Both cock and hen sit on the nest. When the cock is sitting his long tail feathers hang down some distance below the nest.

XXXVIII

The Swift

THE Swift is quite different to any other bird that I have described to you. Some birds spend a lot of time on the ground. Others, like the green pigeon, seem never to come on to the ground. The swift, like the green pigeon, never descends to the ground, but unlike the green pigeon, it never perches in a tree. The swift, when it is not actually flying, (and it spends most of the day in flying) lives in its nest. The feet of most birds are of such a shape that they can grasp a perch and the muscles of the leg are so arranged that, when the bird is resting, the claws naturally grasp the perch, so that the birds grasp their perch when they are asleep. If you look at the feet of the bulbul, you will see that it has three toes in front and one behind. The parrot has two toes in front and two behind. Both kinds of feet enable the bird to grasp a perch firmly. The four toes of the swift all point forward so that the swift cannot grasp a perch. When, therefore, it wants to rest, it has to go to its nest or to hang on to a wall. The swift is a small bird in size, not so large as a sparrow or *Gauriya*. It is black or

very dark brown all over, except a broad white band across the lower part of the back. It flies very fast. Some kinds of swift can fly 50 *kos* in an hour. When it flies, its wings are kept stretched out and it seems to flick the air with the tips. If you watch, you will see dozens of swifts flying



Swifts

overhead in your village. When flying they often utter a screaming note. They build their nests in verandahs, mosques and temples. Sometimes they build them inside great gateways. The nest is a kind of cup which is stuck on to the building to which it is attached. It is made of feathers, grass, straw and, sometimes, some wool. The spittle of the swift is very sticky indeed, and acts as cement, so that the bird by wetting the material it brings in its beak, is able to stick this to the wall to which the nest is attached,

and each subsequent piece of straw or feather is stuck to those already making part of the nest. There is no roof to the nest, but it is usually placed near the roof of a building so that there is only a small space between the top of the nest and the roof. As swifts sleep in their nests all the year round, you can see the nest at all times. If there are any ruined buildings in or near your village, you are almost sure to find some swifts in these and you will see the birds clinging to the outside of their nests and you will be able to observe their dark colouring and the white band across the lower part of the back. Swifts live entirely on gnats and other tiny insects which they catch as they dash through the air. The bill of the swift is very broad so the bird is able to secure its quarry while flying at top speed.

There is another kind of swift which lives in my village and must be in your village if there are any *tari* trees in the village. This bird is called Palm Swift or *Tari Ababil*. Its habits are like those of the swift I have described, but it always builds its nests in palm trees. The nest is the same kind of pocket-like cup as that of the other swift and it is always stuck on to the inside of a palm leaf. This swift is smaller than the other swift and its feet are differently arranged. Both kinds of swifts lay white eggs. Three is the usual number and you may find their eggs at any time from February to August.

XXXIX

The Tree-Pie

THE Indian Tree-Pie has many local names. In Oudh it is called *Mutri*. In some places it is known as *Kotri* and in others as *Mahalat*. In Bengal it is known as *Handi*

chancha and *Takka chor*. Perhaps in your village you have some other name for the bird. The body of the tree-pie is about the size of that of a myna, but the tail is twelve



The Tree-Pie

inches, that is to say two-thirds of a hand, in length. Both the cock and the hen are dressed alike. The head, neck and breast are black, not shining black like the plumage of the king-crow or *Buchanga*, but dull black like an old black coat when it is so worn that it gets a brown tinge.

The rest of the body plumage is reddish brown. The wings and tail are the colour of silver, with some black in them. The tail feathers have black tips, and, as the middle pair of feathers are the longest and the outer pair the shortest, each feather being a little shorter than the inside feather next to it, the tail is wedge-shaped when expanded. As the bird flies, the wedge-shaped silvery tail edged with black makes it very easy to recognise. The tree-pie lives among trees, but it sometimes comes on to the ground. It is not very much afraid of men. It will often visit a verandah and poke its bill into corners for insects on which it feeds largely, but, like its cousin, the crow, it eats many things besides insects. A friend of mine once saw a tree-pie eating a small bat (*Chamgudri*). It is a great thief and is very fond of eating the eggs and young of doves and small birds.

The tree-pie, like the roller (*Nilkant*), is rather noisy. When it is angry, or excited, or alarmed, it sets up a most disagreeable harsh chatter; but when it is happy, it utters a loud and very pleasing note, which sounds like *cogee*, *cogee* or *cochlee*, *cochlee*. It has a great variety of notes, and the Bengali names, which mean "cleaner of cooking pots" and "ringer of money," are doubtless given on account of the notes of the tree-pie.

As soon as the weather begins to get warm, the tree-pies pair off and commence nest-building. The nest is always placed in a tree, usually near the top of a large one. Most nests are, I think, built in mango trees, but you may find the nest in the pipal, the neem, the babul, the shisham, the kikar, and indeed almost any tree of good size. As one would expect from the size of the bird, the nest is rather large. It is usually clumsily built, being a shallow saucer of twigs—often thorny twigs—lined with grass.

It is curious that the most intelligent of the bird tribe—the crows and pies—should build such poor nests.

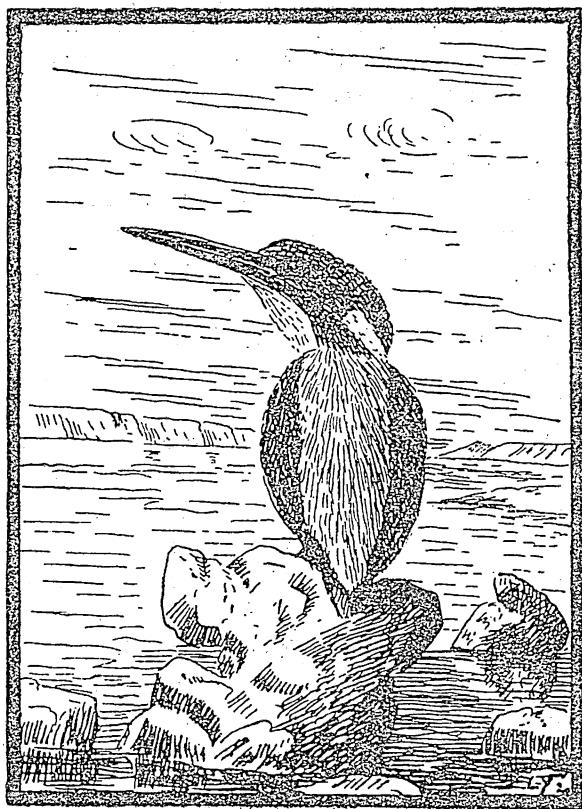
It is difficult to describe the eggs of the tree-pie because they vary so much. The ground colour may be pure white, grey, pale pink, or very pale green. The eggs are nearly always spotted; usually the spots are red, sometimes they are purple, or green or brown. Eggs may be found in April, May, June and July. The young birds, when they leave the nest, are like the parents in colouring, but the tail is much shorter. They are very noisy, but their call is quite different from that of their parents. It is amusing to watch the young birds following the mother about, flapping their wings and clamouring for food. The youngsters remain with their parents for several weeks after they leave the nest, and appear to be a very happy family. After about two months, however, the parents drive away the young birds. This is a very common habit and is probably caused by the food question. During the rains food is abundant and there is plenty in a small mango tope for one family of tree-pies. When the rain ceases, the insects become fewer and then it is necessary for the family to break up. Among animals and birds parental affection soon dies away. You must have noticed this in the case of a bitch and her puppies. While they are quite young, she is very anxious about their welfare and will fight in their defence. When they are a few weeks old, she rapidly loses all interest in them.

XL

King-fishers

THERE is no big *jhil* near my village but sometimes a common king-fisher (*Chota Killkila* or *Nita Machrula*)

comes to the village pond, and occasionally the White-breasted King-fisher (*Kilkila* or *Nula Machrala*) is seen in



The Common King-fisher

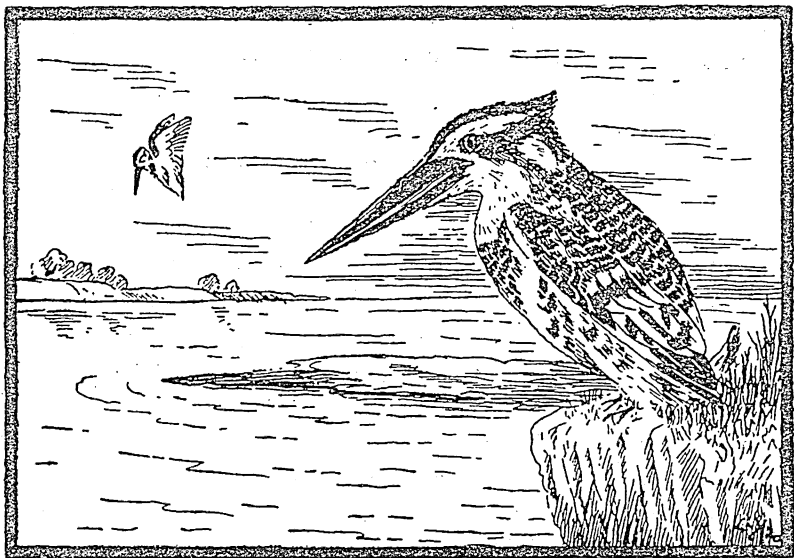
the mango tope near by. If there is a large *jhil* near your village, you are likely to see there both these king-fishers and also the black-and-white or Pied King-fisher (*Koriala Kilkila*). Most kinds of king-fisher live on fish and in consequence they are expert fishers. Indeed, they are

constructed for fishing. The bill is very large to enable the bird to seize fish easily in the water. The legs are very short. King-fishers never run, walk or wade, so they have no need for strong and long legs. The common king-fisher (*Chota Killkila*) is about the size of a sparrow or *Gauriya*. The head is streaked with black and blue, the back, wings and short tail are blue; the blue of the back is very bright. The lower parts are dull red and the cheeks are white. The bill is black and the legs are brilliant red. This king-fisher likes to stay on a branch that overhangs water or on the bank. As it sits, it looks now this way, now that; when it spies a fish it dashes into the water, disappears for a second, and emerges with a victim in its bill. It usually catches small fishes less than the length of your thumb. It swallows these whole.

The White-breasted King-fisher or *Killkila* is about the size of a myna. Its huge bill is dark red and its feet are bright red. The head, neck and all the lower plumage except the white throat and breast are reddish brown. The upper parts are blue. There is some red, black and white in the wings. When this very beautiful bird flies, the wings show a white bar. It feeds on insects which it captures in much the same way as the common king-fisher catches fish. It takes a perch and looks about it until it sees an insect on the ground. Then it dashes on to this and seizes it with its bill.

The third king-fisher is called by the English the Pied King-fisher on account of its black and white plumage. In my village it is called the *Koriala Killkila*. It is about the size of a myna. It may be described as a white bird spotted and streaked with black or a black bird spotted and streaked with white. I think there is rather more white than black in the plumage, but the bill and legs are black.

This bird feeds entirely on fish. It does not sit on a branch or the bank to watch for its prey; it flies over the water; when it thinks it sees a fish, it remains stationary in the air, keeping itself from falling by flapping its wings rapidly. Then suddenly the wings stop moving and the bird drops



Pied King-fishers

into the water as though it were dead; but it is very much alive, for, in a second, it emerges with a fish and flies to the bank, where it swallows it.

All king-fishers utter curious twittering cries. The calls of all are different, and if you watch and listen you will soon learn the cry of each bird and be able to know the bird when you hear it even if you cannot see it.

The nesting habits of all king-fishers are alike. They dig holes in the sides of sand-banks like those made by the

bank myna(*Darya Myna*). The chamber in which the eggs are laid is spherical like a *chatty* and it is at the end of a long, narrow passage. The hole that leads to the nest varies from two to four inches in diameter, according to the size of the bird that excavates it. From four to seven round white eggs are laid. The pied king-fisher nests from January to April, the little king-fisher from January to June and the white-breasted species from March to July.

XLI

Munias.—I.

ALTHOUGH you may not have noticed them in the wild state you must have seen any number of Red Munias or *Lals* in a cage. The English people often call the red munias *Amadavats*. It is a corruption of Ahmadabad, the town in India from which these birds were first sent to England. Red munias are not found in England. Perhaps you may have seen men catching red munias. They are very easily caught. The trap used is an ordinary wicker cage containing three or four munias and having a flap consisting of a frame over which a fine net is stretched. This flap is attached to the bottom of one side of the cage by a hinge. The man who wants to catch the birds puts the cage on the ground near where the wild birds are, lets the flap lie flat on the ground and sprinkles some seed on it. There is a long piece of string attached to the end of the flap passing through the top of the cage. The bird catcher holds the other end of the string and hides behind a bush. The singing of the *Amadavats* inside the cage attracts wild birds to come and settle on the flap and eat the grain. When three or four of them have settled, the

man jerks the string. This draws the flap close to the side of the cage and secures the birds. These are then put inside the cage and the trap is again set.

I should like here to say something about keeping birds in cages. With most birds this is rather cruel. You would not like to be kept for your life alone in a cage about the size of a room even though you were given plenty to eat and drink, and I think that the feelings of a bird in a cage are much the same as yours would be if so confined. However, *Lal Munias*, being such tiny birds, feel confinement less than any other birds. In a large cage they seem to be quite happy. Moreover, several of them are kept in one cage and so they have company. The best bird to keep is the pigeon because he is allowed liberty and can exercise his wings.

By observing *Amadavats* in a cage you may learn much about the habits of birds. At night they all sleep in a row on a perch, just as Seven Sisters (*Sat Bhai*) and bee-eaters (*Patranga*) do. Every bird wants to have another bird on each side of it to keep it warm so that no bird likes being the end one of the row. After three or four birds have perched ready to sleep, the next bird who comes up usually tries to force his way into a place in the middle, but he does not often succeed. He then has to take an outside perch where he pushes up with all his might against his neighbour, and, as the bird at the other end of the row does likewise, it sometimes happens that one of the birds in the middle is squeezed so tight that it is pushed off its perch and then has to take an outside place or sleep standing on the backs of the other birds, which I think sometimes happens.

Another amusing thing about *Lals* in a cage is the way they sing to one another. They like to sit in a row, then one of the birds draws itself up to its full height and sings

a sweet little song. As soon as it ceases, another bird does the same thing. Thus they have regular concerts. As you can see *Lals* in a cage anywhere it is not necessary for me to describe them. You should notice the thick crimson bill which most birds that live entirely on grain possess. The stout mandibles or chaps enable it to husk the grain. The birds that have the most red in them are the cocks and the ones which have the red dull are the hens. The older the cock the more crimson there is in his plumage.

XLII.

Munias.—II.

THE red munia, although fairly common, is so small a bird that it is not often noticed. It is very fond of long *patowal* grass, and if there is a railway line near your village you are likely to see it there. It is also found in rose gardens, but I do not think it ever occurs in mango groves or among trees. It is a bird of the open country, and if your village is in the Meerut or Rohilkhand divisions or in Northern Oudh, you are likely to find its nest, but I do not think you are likely to find it in the Agra division. The nest is ball-shaped—rather larger than a cricket ball. It has a hole at one side for an entrance and is usually placed in the middle of a bush, often close to the ground. It is rather loosely put together and consists of fine grass. Sometimes it is lined by softer grass. About six eggs are usually laid. This munia, like the others, usually builds its nest in the cold weather. You are most likely to see the nest from October to January.

Less common than the red munia is the Green Munia or *Hari Munia*. This bird, unlike the red munia, is often found

in mango groves. It builds a nest like that of the red munia, but it does not breed, I think, in the United Provinces,



White-throated Munias

except perhaps in the Jhansi district. As the name implies, its prevailing hue is green, bright in the cock and dull in the hen. The bill is red, the lower plumage is yellow, much brighter in the cock than in the hen. The sides of the body have dark green and white bars. You may sometimes see

this bird in a cage but it is not nearly so common as the red munia.

The commonest munia is the bird which the English call the White-throated or Brown Munia and the Indians call the *Charchara*. The name white-throated is not very suitable, for this Munia is a dull brown bird—the colour of earth. There is a patch of white on the back just above the tail and some black in the wings. It is by far the commonest of the Munias. It has a twittering sparrow-like note and it is usually found in small flocks. Unlike the other Munias, this bird sometimes enters the *abadi*. Not having beautiful plumage it is not caught and caged in the same way as the red and the green Munias are. It builds a ball-shaped nest, but this is larger and more clumsy than that of the red Munia. The nest is usually placed low down in a thick thorny bush, but it is sometimes found in a hole in a wall. The entrance is at the side. Seven or eight white eggs are laid. This bird seems to breed twice in the year; you are likely to find its nests from January to March and between July and September.

There is yet another Munia which the English call the Spotted Munia and the Indians the *Telia Munia* or *Seenabaz* or *Singbaz*. This is rather a handsome bird. Its upper plumage is reddish brown except the head, chin and throat, which are dull red. The lower plumage is brown with a large number of white patches on it and this is why it is called the spotted Munia by the English. Its nest is of the same kind as that of the other Munias but is usually placed somewhat farther from the ground, and is larger than those of the other Munias, being nearly as big as a small football. This is the largest of the Munias; it is five inches long. The green Munia is the smallest—four inches. As the Sparrow or *Gauriya* is six inches long, you will see what

tiny birds Munias are. It is curious that such small birds should build such large nests.

XLIII

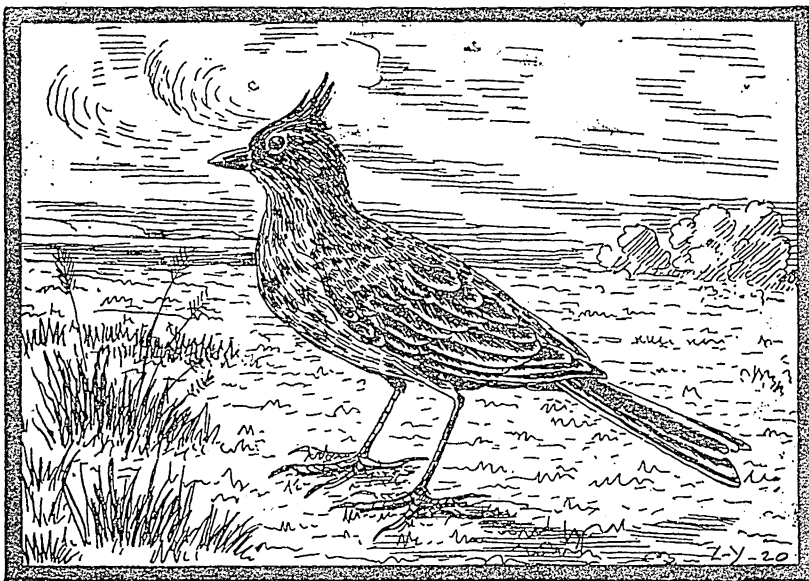
The Crested Lark and its Relatives

MANY of you have probably seen the crested lark or *Chandul* in a cage, because this bird is kept for its song. As the bird loves to sing when it is flying high in the air, it is cruel to keep it in a cage. For the benefit of those who do not know the *Chandul* I may say that it is a little larger than a Sparrow (*Gauriya*) but of more slender build. Its plumage is earthy brown with some yellowish and dark brown markings. From the back of the head there is a little tuft of feathers which forms a crest. If you would see this bird in a state of freedom you must go outside your village to the open fields and in those that are not cultivated you are likely to see some Crested Larks. These birds love to ascend thirty or forty feet in the air and sing there, and, after hovering for a little, drop quickly to the ground still singing.

The warm weather is the time to look for the nest of the *Chandul*. This is a very shallow cup made of fine grass with perhaps a lining of hair, wool, or feathers. The nest is built on the ground and is so loosely put together that it is apt to fall to pieces if you try to pick it up. Three eggs are usually laid. These are nearly white speckled with brown.

There is another lark called by the English the Sky-lark, which the Indians also call the *Chandul*. This is perhaps a better singer than the Crested Lark and rises much higher in the air. It is like the *Chandul* in appearance but it lacks the crest.

If there be some uncultivated land near your village with small bushes growing on it you are likely to see the *Aggia* or Red-winged Bush-Lark there. This bird has no crest: otherwise it is much like the *Chandul* except that



The Crested Lark

there is some dull red in its wing which you will be able to see when it is in the air. The habit of this bird is to perch on a bush or sometimes a *band*, ascend about twenty feet into the air and then drop down, uttering a monotonous note. This bird usually returns to the place from which it starts. Each flight lasts less than a minute and after a rest of one or two minutes the bird takes another flight, and this continues sometimes for more than an hour.

There is another bird called by the English the Finch-Lark because its bill is thick like that of the sparrow and other finches. The Indians call this bird the *Duri*, *Deora*, *Dabak Chiri* or *Jothauli*. This also lives on uncultivated fields and is very common. If you go outside your village and look out for the bird you will probably see seven or eight whenever you go. The Finch-Lark is much smaller than a sparrow. The legs are short and the body broad and flat. The head of the cock is gray, his back is light brown with dark brown in the wings. His underparts are very dark brown, almost black. Some of this extends half way round his neck and from the chin there is a dark band through the eye. The hen is brown all over. This bird always sits on the ground and every now and then takes a flight in the air, when it utters a monotonous note. On account of the dark lower parts and light upper parts the cock is very easy to recognise.

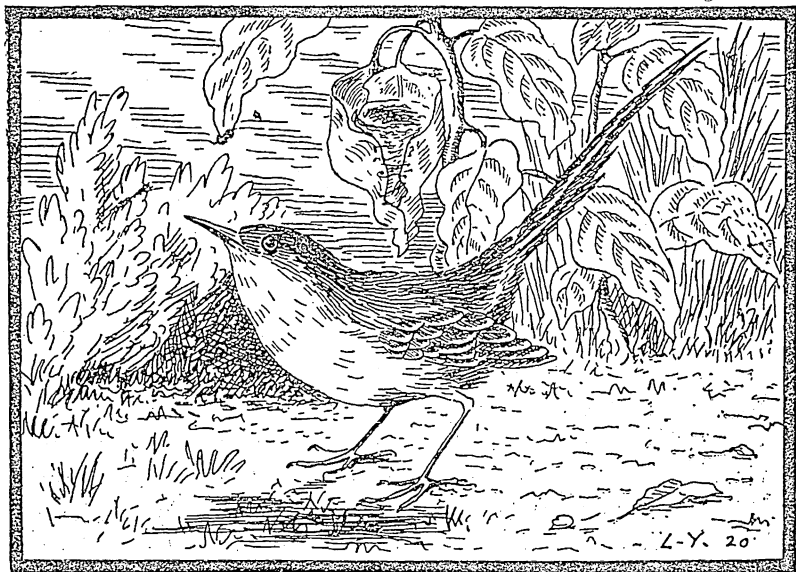
The only other bird having the lower parts darker than the upper that is common in the plains of India is the Indian Robin or *Dama*, but you cannot possibly mistake a Robin for a Finch-Lark. The robin carries its tail high in the air and there is a red patch of feathers under the tail, whereas the tail of the Finch-Lark is very short and is always pressed close to the ground and there is no red under it. All kinds of larks feed on seeds and insects, which they pick off the ground.

XLIV

Warblers

IN every grove, hedge and row of *patowal* grass numbers of Warblers are found. There are many different kinds of

warblers in India. Some live in India all the year round and others come only in the cold weather. They are all small birds not so large as Sparrows, and the plumage of nearly all is dull brown. Each warbler is so like other



The Indian Tailor Bird (Phutki) and nest

warblers that Indians call them all *Phutki*. If however you look carefully, you will see that there are many different kinds. I cannot attempt to describe all that come to my village. There are three kinds which are found in every village and which are fairly easy to recognise.

First there is the Tailor Bird. At first sight this is just a plain brown bird. But if you look at it carefully you will see that the head is tinted with reddish yellow and the back with green. The under parts are white. At the sides of

the neck is a dark line which is only seen when the bird utters its loud chirrup which sounds like *towee, towee, towee*. In the breeding season the two middle feathers of the tail of the cock become longer than the others and project beyond them; thus it is quite easy to distinguish the cock in the breeding season. The English call this the Tailor Bird because of the wonderful nest it builds. Just as a tailor makes a bag by sewing together one or more pieces of cloth so this Tailor Bird makes its nest by stitching together one or more leaves. If the leaf is a large one, the bird sews together the two edges to make a cup or bag. If the leaves are small, two, or sometimes three, are sewn together. Having selected the leaf or leaves it will sew together, the bird makes with its sharp bill some holes along the margin. Then it finds strands of cobweb by means of which it draws the edges of the leaf or leaves together to form a bag. The bands of cobweb would not be strong enough to hold the edges of the leaves together when the bird is sitting in the nest, so the Tailor Bird strengthens these by pieces of cotton which it obtains from *semal* leaves or from a human *darzi* if there is one in the vicinity. Sometimes a Tailor Bird will enter a house and carry away in its beak pieces of cotton wool.

In order that the cotton shall hold, the bird frays it out after it has pushed the end through each of the holes it has bored in the leaf. Having thus made the bag sufficiently strong to hold a nestful of young birds the Tailor Bird lines the nest cosily with the cotton of the *semal* or other soft material. When the nest is ready, four tiny white eggs, speckled with red, are laid in it.

The second warbler in my village is called the Ashy Wren-Warbler. Indians call it *Phutki* — the name they give the Tailor Bird. If we call the latter *Darzi*, we can

distinguish the two. The upper plumage is the colour of ashes and the lower very pale reddish yellow. This is not so sprightly as the Tailor Bird and the tail appears to be very loosely attached to the body. You may know this bird by the curious snapping noise it makes when it flies. Some think this noise is made by the beak, others by the tail; perhaps you can find out. This bird weaves a beautiful nest in the rains, just as the *Baya* does, but the nest instead of hanging from a branch of a tree, so that a passer-by can see it, is carefully hidden in the long grass to which it is attached. The nest is like an egg in shape with the entrance at the side. The eggs are a beautiful bright red.

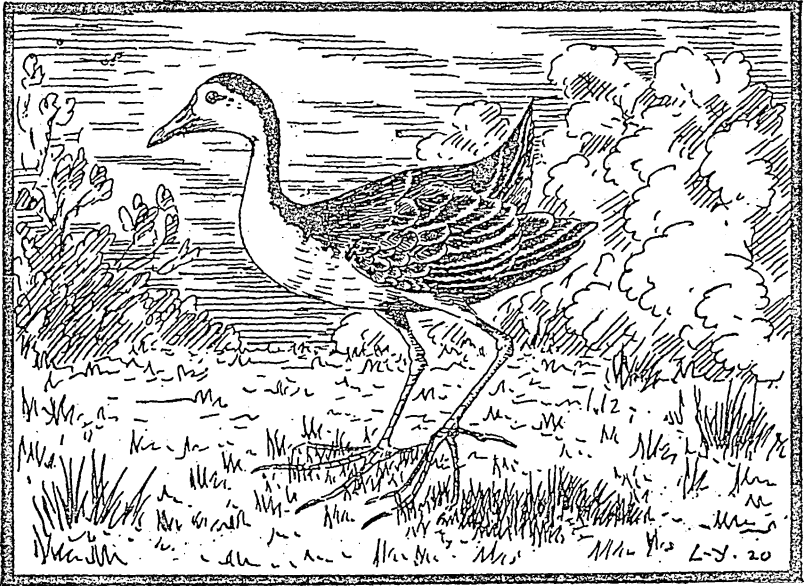
The third Warbler is called by the English the Indian Wren-Warbler. The Indians call it *Ghas Phitki*, because the bird lives in *sarpat* and other long grass. It is a dull brown bird with nothing remarkable in its appearance. It weaves a nest just like that of the Ashy Wren-Warbler. The eggs are dull green, blotched with black, brown and purple.

XLV

The Water-hen

If there is any kind of a pond in or near your village at the side of which some bamboos or other bushes are growing, you are certain to see a pair of Water-hens in your village. The Water-hen is about the size of an ordinary fowl. Both cock and hen are dressed alike. In colour the plumage is very dark brown, almost black, but the face, throat and breast are pure white and there is a dull red patch of feathers under the tail, and, as the tail is usually carried erect, like that of the Robin, the red feathers under the tail are easy to see. The English call this bird the White-breasted

Water-hen. Indians call it the *Kinati* or *Banmurgi*. Although it lives in the neighbourhood of water it seems to feed on dry ground. It does not like being watched. As soon as it thinks you are looking at it, it walks quickly



The White-breasted Water-hen.

away to the nearest cover. During most seasons of the year it is a quiet bird, but when the monsoon has set in it becomes very noisy, especially at night. It is hard to describe the extraordinary noise the bird makes. Mr. Aitkin says the call of one bird he heard began with loud harsh roars which might have been those of a Bear being roasted alive! Then the note suddenly changed to one like the *coo* of a Dove.

The nest is rather a large and clumsy structure made of twigs. It is usually placed in a bamboo, a thick bush or

high up in a palm tree. When the nest is in the last situation, the adult birds, which rarely take to their wings, do not fly up to it, but run up the rough bark. Four eggs are laid which are pinkish white in colour, spotted and specked with red, purple and brown. The young birds are black all over and when seen swimming in the water look like little black ducklings. They are able to walk as soon as they leave the egg, and as you see them in water before they can fly, the parent bird must herself carry them down to the ground. So far as I know nobody has seen how this is done, whether the mother bird carries them with her toes or whether she puts them on her back or in her beak, or how she does it. If you watch for the nest of the Water-hen in your village next rains you may be able to see the mother bringing the young ones down from the nest and find out how she does this.

There are a great many things to learn about most kinds of birds and I hope that the book will cause some Indians to take interest in the birds in their village and write out accounts of their doings. This is the way we find out all we know about birds.

XLVI

Minivets

You may perhaps have noticed in the mango tope near your village half a dozen gray birds, of which some have black throats and red breasts, fluttering about among the topmost branches of the trees, looking for little insects and uttering low notes. These are Minivets. They are called *Bulalchasm* or *Raja Lal* in my village. Perhaps they have a different name in yours. They go about in little flocks

which consist of one or two cocks and five or six hens. Sometimes you see only one cock in a flock and in South India they call the bird the Beloved of Seven Damsels. The minivet is about the size of a sparrow (*Gauriya*), but the tail is longer. The greater part of the plumage of the cock is dark gray with a bright red band across the breast and some red in the tail and wings. The chin of the cock is black and the lower parts the colour of an orange. The hens have the upper plumage gray and the lower plumage very pale yellow and have a yellow spot in the wing.

Minivets are restless birds. Except in the breeding season they do not stay long in one place; you may see them in the mango grove near your village to-day and to-morrow find them gone. When they are in the grove, you cannot mistake them. There are no other birds like them that keep to the topmost branches of the trees.

As soon as the hot weather comes on, the minivets pair and build very beautiful nests. These are tiny cups, usually placed high up in a tree in the fork of a branch. The nests are made of very fine twigs which are bound together and to the fork of the branch to which they are attached by cobweb. Unless the bird is sitting in it the nest is very difficult to see without climbing up in a tree. If in March or April you see a pair of minivets in a mango grove every day you may be certain that they have a nest, and if you watch carefully, you will probably be able to find the nest by seeing one or the other of the birds fly up to it, or actually sitting in it. Three eggs are usually laid. These vary a good deal in colouring. Some are white with brown blotches, others are bluish white with markings of brown, purple and red.

There is another kind of minivet that visits my village only in the cold weather. It is even more beautiful than

the minivet I have just described. The English call this bird the short-billed minivet and the Indians the *Sat Sukt Kapi*. Of this minivet the cocks are black and bright red and the hens black and bright yellow. When the birds fly the red and yellow markings form bars that run along and not across the wing. You cannot possibly mistake these birds on account of their beautiful and extraordinary colouring, but they are not common and even though you look out for them carefully, you probably will not see more than two or three flocks during the whole of the cold weather. In the summer they go to the Himalayas where they nest.

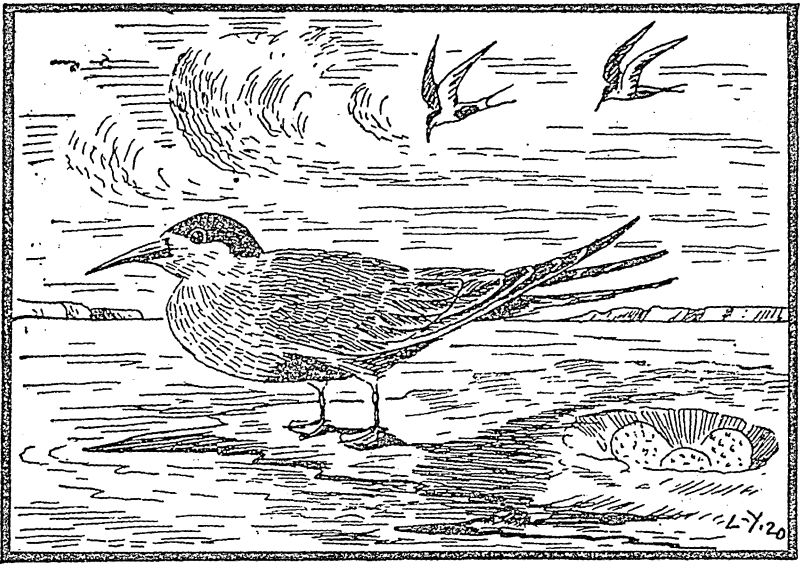
XLVII

Terns

SOMETIMES a very beautiful bird comes and catches fish in the pond in my village. This bird is called a Tern by the English and I think the Indians call it the *Titri*. It is nearly as long as the forearm of a man, its tail being as long as the head and the body together. The tail is forked, that is to say, the longest feathers are the two outer ones and the shortest feathers are the middle ones. Most of the plumage is white or pale gray but the underparts, except the throat and part of the breast, are black and there is a black cap on the head. The bill and the legs and the feet are the colour of an orange. The feet are webbed like those of a duck, that is to say, the toes are joined together by skin. The object of having webbed feet is to enable a bird to swim, the feet acting as paddles. Terns, however, do not often swim. They have very long, slender wings and are able to fly very fast and for a long period together. The flight of

a tern is very graceful. Notice how slender the body is; it is built for speed.

Terns live chiefly on fish. They fly a little way above the water and when they see a fish, they drop down and pick



Black-bellied Tern (Titri)

it out of the water. When a tern fishes, it does not dive right into the water like a king-fisher but cleverly picks the fish out, almost without getting wet. Sometimes a tern will rob a king-fisher of a fish or a frog which it has caught. Terns never perch in trees. When they want to rest, they stand on a sand bank or little island in the middle of a river or a tank. Most terns nest in the hot weather. They lay their eggs on the bare sand. These are of various shades of gray, pale green, pale pink or buff and spotted and splashed

with brown. If you visit any sand bank in the middle of the Ganges or the Jumna in April, you will see hundreds of nests of terns. If you are fortunate, you may see some baby terns. These are covered with pale yellow fluff, having black or brown markings. Baby terns run very fast and can swim well. The tern that I have described above, and which is the one which most commonly visits *jhils* and ponds (although it also fishes on large rivers), is called the Black-bellied Tern.

There are many other kinds of terns in India, but nearly all these keep to rivers or large tanks. The only other tern which you are likely to see fishing on the pond in your village is the Indian River Tern. This is larger than the Black-bellied Tern with a longer and more deeply forked tail. The lower parts are white and the bill bright yellow. The habits of this tern are like those of the Black-bellied Tern. The two often nest on the same sand bank, along with other river birds.

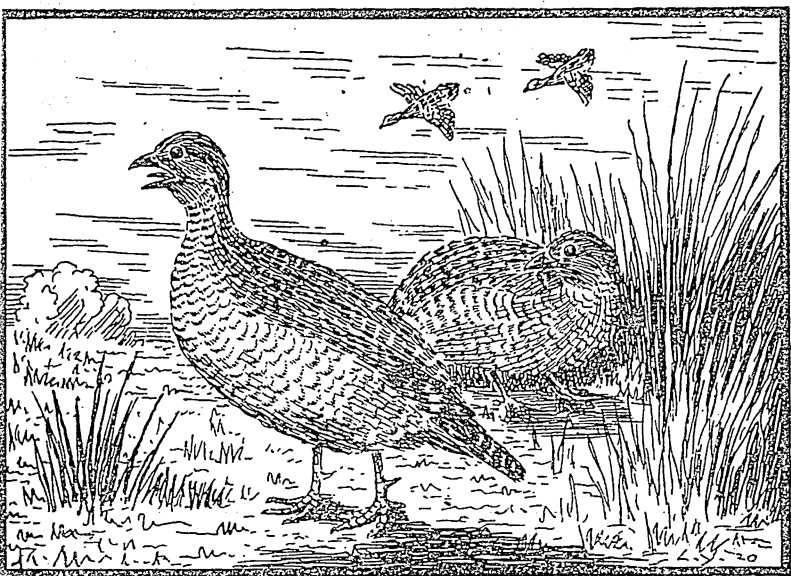
Terns cannot sing, but they have peculiar cries which they often utter while flying. If you visit a sand bank on which terns have nests, the birds emit loud screams, and, if you go near the nest and handle the eggs, the parent birds will fly over your head and swoop down so that they almost touch you, but they will, I think, not actually attack a man.

XLVIII

Partridges

If I were asked to name the bird most unlike the tern in habits and appearance, I think I should name the Partridge. The tern spends a great deal of its time in the air; its flight is easy and graceful and costs no effort. The wings are

long and pointed and the body is thin. The tern makes no attempt to conceal itself; when it rests it stands on bare open ground where it can be seen by every one. The tern very rarely walks and it feeds on fish and other creatures



Grey Partridges

that live in the water. The partridge does not often fly and is a very fast runner. Its flight is noisy and laborious. The wings are short and rounded, the body is plump. The partridge takes to cover when a man approaches, and its brown barred plumage makes it difficult to see when standing on the ground. You must know the Partridge (*Titar*). If you have not seen it running about in the fields at the outskirts of the *abadi*, you must often have seen it in cages or following its master when he takes it for a walk in the

morning. The partridge, although not a showy bird, has beautiful plumage; the ground colour of this is brown and in most parts of the body there are numbers of wavy black cross bars and broader milk-coloured ones. There are no bars on the head, which is washed with dull red. There are also dull red patches on the wings. The legs are bright red. The partridge picks up its food from the ground and feeds chiefly on seeds and insects. In the cold weather it goes about in little flocks of five or six. These usually live in a dense thicket and go out to feed.

You must be familiar with the call of the partridge, which is heard chiefly in the mornings and evenings and is very loud and shrill, it sounds like *pateella, pateella, pateella*.

The partridge is caged for three reasons, first because its call is liked by some people, secondly because it becomes very attached to its master and will follow him about like a dog, and thirdly because the cock is a great fighter and is kept to fight with other cocks.

Partridges begin to pair in February and you are likely to see eggs from March to June. Sometimes a second brood is brought up between September and November. The nest is a hollow in the ground, usually placed by a tuft of grass or a prickly pear bush. The hollow is often lined with a little grass. From six to nine eggs are laid. These are white, tinged with very pale brown; there are no spots on them.

There is another very handsome partridge called the Black Partridge or *Kala Titar*. This is not so common as the *Titar* I have just described, and does not usually come near villages. Although it is called the Black Partridge, it is not black all over; the base of the plumage is black, but there are numbers of white and brown spots and patches, and the cock has a broad band of chestnut colour round his

neck. The hen is not so showy as the cock. The habits of this bird are much like those of the common partridge, but, the note is very different. This is a very loud high-pitched call, which sounds like *juk, juk, tee-tee-tur*. Some Indians say that its call sounds like *Subhan teri kudrat*. Others say the bird calls out *lehsun, piiaz, adrak* (garlic, onion and ginger!).

XLIX

Butcher-birds

ALTHOUGH they do not actually come into the *abadi*, Butcher-birds (*Lahtora*) live in the fields near my village. If there is a small *babul* tree between two fields in your village, you are likely to see a butcher-bird in it. Butcher-birds are rather larger than bulbuls and they sit very upright with the rather long tail pointing downwards. All have a broad black band running from the beak through the eye to the back of the neck.

Their habits are like those of the shikra. Butcher-birds feed on crickets, locusts, lizards, and sometimes even tiny birds. They take up a perch on the outer branch of a small thorny tree and keep a sharp look out; when they see an insect or other small creature on the ground below, they pounce upon it, seize it in their sharp claws and take it to the tree, there to pull it to pieces. Sometimes, in order better to enable them to pull a fairly large animal to pieces, they impale it in a thorn.

There are three kinds of butcher-birds found in my village. One is the Gray Butcher-bird or Shrike as the English call it. The Indians call it the *Safaid* or *Dudiya Lahtora*. The other two are known as the Bay-backed Shrike or *Pachanak* and the Rufous-backed Shrike or *Mattiya*

Lahtora or *Kajala Lahtora*. The biggest of these is the Gray Shrike. The Indians are not correct when they call



The Grey Butcher-bird or Shrike

it *Safaid Lahtora* because the plumage is not white, but pale gray. There is, however, a good deal of white in the wings which is very conspicuous when the bird flies. All the lower plumage is white. There is a broad black band

through the eye which I have already mentioned, and there is some black in the wings and tail. When the bird sits, it looks chiefly gray, and when it flies, it appears to be black and white. The Gray Shrike is nearly as large as a myna.

The Bay-backed Shrike is a little bigger than a bulbul. It is coloured much like the Gray Shrike except that its back is dull red. The third shrike is the Rufous-backed Shrike. This has a red back but can be distinguished from the Bay-backed Shrike by the fact that there is no white in the tail.

All the three kinds of shrikes have the black band through the eye. This, together with the powerful beak, the upright posture of the bird when sitting with tail pointing downwards, its being alone, and its habit of sitting at the end of a branch of a thorny tree or on a telegraph wire and swooping down to seize objects on the ground make it impossible to mistake the shrike or butcher-bird.

In the hot weather the shrikes nest. They nearly always build their nest in some thorny tree, by preference a *babul*. The nest is a cup made of thorny twigs, grass and roots. There are usually some pieces of rag worked into the nest and sometimes pieces of rag hang down, giving the nest a very untidy appearance. The nest is often placed rather close to the trunk of the tree. Three or four eggs are laid. The eggs have the background white and are spotted with brown and purple. There are usually more spots at the broad end of the egg than at the narrow end and sometimes the spots at the broad end take the form of a ring. If you go near a nest that contains eggs, the sitting bird usually flies away before you get near enough to see what kind of a shrike it is, but after the young ones are hatched, the parents are bold and they will bring food to their young when a man is standing quite close by.

Young shrikes are said to make excellent pets. They become very tame and like to be fed on raw meat.

Although there are three kinds of shrikes, the habits of all are almost exactly alike and what I have said above applies to all three kinds.

L

The Sandpiper and the Did-you-do-it

ON most days of the cold weather a solitary Sandpiper or *Tutwari* is to be seen on the margin of the pond in my village. The Sandpiper is about the size of a myna, but it has no tail to speak of and its legs are longer. The upper parts of its plumage are dark greenish brown, very much the colour of the mud on which the sandpiper spends its time picking up tiny insects. The lower parts are white, as is the tail, but this is covered by the wings except when the bird flies. The sandpiper spends its whole time strutting about at the very edge of the water. If you go near it, it flies away for a short distance a few inches above the surface of the water and you will then notice that its wings are much curved and pointed and that there is a very narrow white band running along the length of each wing. As soon as it alights it wags its short tail up and down and then proceeds to feed as before. Sometimes when it flies it utters a curious plaintive cry. You cannot mistake this bird.

There are many other kinds of sandpiper, but this is the only one likely to be found at a small pond and no other sandpiper has a white bar in the wing. This bird visits the plains of India only in the cold weather. In April and May those that come to my village fly to Kashmir where they

breed. As soon as the weather begins to get cold again in the plains the sandpipers return.

The Red-wattled Lapwing is commonly called by the English the Did-you-do-it, in imitation of its curious call which sounds something like "Did you do it, pity to do it." This call must be familiar to every one. The Indians call the bird the *Titiri*. The did-you-do-it does not enter the *abadi*, but spends its time in the fields on which there are no crops. There is no bird easier to distinguish than the did-you-do-it. The plumage is black or dark brown and white. The under-parts are all white, and on each side of the head there is a broad white band running from the eye down the whole length of the neck. There are two white bands across the tail and a broad white band in each wing. When the bird flies you can see that the wing bands join the upper tail band to form a line with two sharp bends in it. The bill is red and there is in front of the eye a large red lump of skin which the English call a wattle. The long legs are bright yellow.

There is another lapwing which sometimes comes to my village and which differs chiefly from the one I have described in having the wattles yellow. This is called the yellow-wattled lapwing by the English. I do not know the Indian name for the bird. The one might be called the *Lalmun* and the other the *Pilamun*.

The habits of both are alike. They run about the fields picking up insects. In the hot weather they scrape out a shallow hole in the ground and lay in it four eggs blotched with brown. These are pointed at one end and are so placed in the nest that the points of all four touch. When the birds have eggs, they are very wary and it is not easy to find the nest. The best way to do this is to sit at a distance and watch. After a time one of the birds will suddenly sit

down; you may then know that it is sitting on its eggs. If you mark the spot and walk up to it, you will see the eggs. The young birds are able to run as soon as they are hatched. They are pretty little things, covered with soft black and brown down. The parent birds get very excited and make a great noise when a man handles their young ones.

This finishes the account of the "Birds of an Indian Village." I have not described all of them, but only those that are to be seen almost every day.

Had my village been on the banks of the Ganges or near a big *jhil*, I should have had to describe 30 or 40 more birds. Perhaps I will write some day about these birds and call the series of papers "More Birds of an Indian Village."

If what I have written has induced any one to take an interest in all the charming birds which live around him, this little book will not have been written in vain. In conclusion, let me repeat that the man, woman or child who does not take interest in the birds, loses some of the pleasures of life.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BIRDS DESCRIBED

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BIRDS DESCRIBED

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English Name	Latin Name	Vernacular Name	Chapter in which described
Amadavat <i>vide</i> Munia, red			
Babbler, Jungle	<i>Crateropus canorus</i>	Sathbhai	13
" , large grey	" <i>malcomi</i>	Gangai	13
Barbet, green	<i>Thereiceryx zeylonicus</i>	Bara Bassunta	10
Baya, <i>vide</i> Weaver-bird			
Bee-eater, blue-tailed	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	Bara Patringa	32
" , little green	" <i>viridis</i>	Patringa, Patana, Harial	32
Brain-fever-bird <i>vide</i> Hawk-cuckoo			
Bulbul, red-vented	<i>Molpastes bengalensis</i>	Bulbul	21
" , red-whiskered	<i>Otocompsa emeria</i>		21
Bush-lark, red-winged	<i>Mirafera erythroptera</i>	Aggia	43
Butcher-bird, <i>vide</i> Shrike			
Buzzard, white-eyed	<i>Butastur teesa</i>	Tisa	36
Coppersmith	<i>Xantholama hematocephala</i>	Bassunta	10
Corby	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Bara kauwa	5
Coucal, <i>vide</i> Crow-pheasant			
Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Kauwa	5
Crow-pheasant	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Mohok	15

English Name	Latin Name	Vernacular Name	Chapter in which described
Cuckoo, hawk, <i>vide</i> Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus jacobinus</i>		14
Cuckoo, pied crested			
Did-you-do-it, <i>vide</i> Lapwing, red-wattled	<i>Turtur canbayensis</i>	Chhota Fakhta	26
Dove, little brown	<i>Ænopenelia tranquebarica</i>	Siroti Fakhta	26
" , red-winged	<i>Turtur risorius</i>	Dhor Fakhta	26
" , ring	"	Chitroka Fakhta	26
" , spotted	" <i>suratensis</i>		
Eagle, steppe	<i>Aquila bifasciata</i>	Juniz	36
" , tawny	" <i>vindhiana</i>	Wokhab	36
Egret, cattle	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	Gai bagla, surkhia bagla, lad bagla, doria bagla	30
" , large	<i>Herodias alba</i>	Bara Bagla, Tar Bagla	30
" , little	" <i>garzetta</i>	Karchia bagla, kilehia	30
" , smaller	" <i>intermedia</i>	Karchia bagla	30
Falcon, peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Bhairi, Bhairi Bacha	36
" , shahin	" <i>peregrinator</i>	Shahin, shahin kahi	36
Finch-lark	<i>Pyrrhulanda grisea</i>	Deora, Duri, Dabak chiri, Jothauli	43
Fly catcher, grey-headed	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	Zard Phutki	37
" , paradise	<i>Terpsiphoneparadis</i>	Shah Bulbul, Hussaini Bulbul, Sultana Bulbul, Taklah	37
" , white-browed fantail	<i>Rhipidura albifrontata</i>	Macharya	37

English Name	Latin Name	Vernacular Name	Chapter in which described
Harrier, marsh	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Kutar	36
Harrier, pale	" <i>macurus</i>	Dastmal, Pattai	36
Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	Popiya	14
Heron, pond, <i>vide</i> pond-heron			
Honeysucker, <i>vide</i> Sun bird			
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa indica</i>	Hudhud	18
King-crow	<i>Dicurus ater</i>	Bhuchanga	2
King-fisher, common	<i>Alcedo ispida</i>	Chota Kilkila, Nila Machrala	40
" , pied	<i>Ceryle varia</i>	Koriala kilkila	40
" , white-breasted	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Kilkila, Nula Machrala	40
Kite	<i>Milvus govinda</i>	Chil	23
Koel	<i>Eudynamis honorata</i>	Koel	6
Lapwing, red-wattled	<i>Sarcogrammus indiens</i>	Titiri	50
" , yellow-wattled	<i>Sarcophorus malabaricus</i>	Titiri	50
Lark, crested	<i>Galerita cristata</i>	Chandul	43
" , sky	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Chandul	43
Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Dhaya	7
Merlin, red-headed	<i>Accipiter chioquera</i>	Turunti, chetwa	36
Munia, green	<i>Stictospiza formosa</i>	Hari Munia	42
" , red	<i>Sporaeeginithus amandava</i>	Lal	41, 42
" , spotted	<i>Uroloncha punctulata</i>	Telia munia, Seenabaz, singbaz	42

English Name	Latin Name	Vernacular Name	Chapter in which described
Munia, white-throated	<i>Uroloncha malabarica</i>	Charchara	42
Minivet, little	<i>Pericrocotus peregrinus</i>	Bulachasm, Raja Lal	46
" , short-billed	" <i>brevirostris</i>	Sat Suki Kapi	46
Myna, bank	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	Ganga maina, Daria Maina	11, 12
" , brahminy	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>	Pawai, Popya	11, 12
" , common	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Maina Desi maina	11, 12
" , grey-headed	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	Pawai	11, 12
" , pied	<i>Sturnopastor contra</i>	Abilaq maina	11, 12
Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>		31
Oriole	<i>Oriolus kundu</i>	Pilak	3
" , black-headed	" <i>melanocephalus</i>	Pilak, Zardak, Pirola	3
Owl, scops	<i>Scops giu</i>	Chogad kusial	34
Owlet, jungle	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	Kala Kasut, Jungli Chogad	34
" , spotted	<i>Athene brama</i>	Khukhusata, Khusattia	34
Paddy bird <i>vide</i> Pond heron			
Parrot <i>vide</i> Paroquet			
Paroquet, blossom-headed	<i>Palacornis cyanocephalus</i>	Lalsira Tota	17
" , rose-ringed	" <i>torquatus</i>	Tota	17
Partridge, black	<i>Francolinus vulgaris</i>	Kala Titar	48
" , grey	" <i>pondicerianus</i>	Titar	48
Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Kabutar	27

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF BIRDS DESCRIBED

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English Name	Latin Name	Vernacular Name	Chapter in which described
Pigeon, Green	<i>Crocopus phoenicopterus</i>	Harial	28
Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Bagla, Andha Bagla	29
Red-headed merlin, <i>vide</i> Merlin			
Redstart	<i>Ruticilla rufiventris</i>	Lal Gonda, Thir thura	19
Robin	<i>Thamnobia cambaiensis</i>	Dama	8
Roller	<i>Coracias indica</i>	Nilkant	1
Sandpiper	<i>Totanus hypoleucus</i>		50
Seven Sisters, <i>vide</i> babbler			
Shikra	<i>Astur badius</i>	Shikra, Chipka, Chipak	36
Shrike, bay-backed	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	Pachanak	49
" , grey	" , <i>lahtora</i>		49
" , rufous-backed	" , <i>erythronotus</i>	Safaid Lahtora, Dudiya Lahtora	49
Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Mattiya Lahtora, Kajala Lahtora	49
" , yellow-throated	<i>Gymnorhis flavicollis</i>	Gauriya	4
Sparrow-hawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Raji, Tooti, Jungali Churi	4
Starling	<i>Sturnus menzbieri</i>	Basha, Bashin	11, 12
" , rose-coloured	<i>Pastor roseus</i>	Teliya maina	11, 12
Sunbird	<i>Arachnechthra asiatica</i>	Gulabi maina	11, 12
Swift	<i>Cypselus affinis</i>	Shakar Khora	25
		Ababil	38
Tailor-bird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	Phutki	44
Tern, black-bellied	<i>Sterna melanogaster</i>		47

Chapter
in which

Vernacular Name

Latin Name

English Name

Latin Name

Vernacular Name

Chapter
in which
described

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39

24

24

24

20

45

16

22

9

9

9

44

44

Tern, river

Tree pie

Vulture, King

" , scavenger

" , white-backed

Wagtail, grey

" , pied

" , white

Water-hen

Weaver-bird

White-eye

White-eyed Buzzard, White-eyed

Woodpecker, golden-backed

" , pied

" , pigny

Wren-Warbler, Ashy

" , Indian

Sterna seena

Dendrocygna rufa

Otorys calvus

Neophron ginginianus

Pseudogyps bengalensis

Motacilla melanope

" maderaspatensis

" alba

Amaurornis phoeniceus

Ploceus baya

Zosterops palpebrosa

White-eyed

Brachypterus aurantius

Liopterus maharattensis

Lyngipterus hardwickii

Prinia socialis

" inornata

Mutri, Kotri, Mahalat

Raj gidh

Safed gidh

Gidh

Dhobin

Kinati, Banmurghi

Baya

Baboona

Kathphuria

Bauna Kathphuria

Phutki

Phutki